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Nation-Building Is Not for All

The Politics of Education in Afghanistan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The development of state education in Afghanistan represents a good point of departure for understanding the successes and failures of nation-building in Afghanistan. Throughout the last 90 years of Afghan history, controversy over state education has taken two main (and interlinked) dimensions. The first is the dichotomy between the predominantly secular education offered by the Afghan state from the 1920s onwards (the state schools or *maktabs*) and the predominantly privately imparted religious education that had dominated unchallenged until then (the religious schools or *madrasas*). The second is the conflict between community views on education, centred around local needs, and the desire of various governments to use education for nation building or simply to indoctrinate the young generations. While the political significance of these controversies is obvious, the development of a state educational sector with the characteristics that it acquired after its large scale roll-out in the 1960s also had a number of indirect implications for state and society. Schools became the main presence of the state beyond the administrative district centres, embodying the direct influence of the state in the villages.

State education in Afghanistan developed slowly until the 1960s and with numerous ups and downs. From the 1960s, state education started reaching out to the villages on an unprecedented scale. The low quality of the education provided, plus some hesitation in pushing for state education in rural communities, left large conservative constituencies nearly intact, but sufficed to create friction with elders and mullahs. At the same time, the slow progress of state education and in particular its limited impact in terms of nation-building alienated a new educated class which had absorbed the stated national aims of the monarchy. Daud Khan's republic was more proactive on the educational front, but still not enough to eliminate the frustration of an educated class increasingly affected by underemployment and meagre salaries. The investment in education for families and individuals did not bring material rewards as assumed; the mismatch between educational policy and the needs of the economy is a constant of Afghanistan's history. Various governments until 1978, who also inconclusively toyed with the idea of making Pashto the cornerstone of their educational policy, only succeeded in strengthening the frustration of the nascent Pashtun intelligentsia.

From 1978 onwards, a long series of wars inflicted massive damage on the educational sector, both because of destroyed infrastructure and loss of life and because of a further polarisation of views and attitudes concerning state education. The leftists in power in 1978–1992 used schools to spread their views and propaganda, particularly during the early years of their stay in power; the reaction of the opposition was violent. Although the leftists believed in state education more then anybody else, the impact of their policies was mainly

negative because they strengthened resistance to state education.

The 1992–2001 period was one of neglect as far as education was concerned; the Rabbani and the Taliban regimes had their own views about how state education should be re-designed, but busy as they were fighting, and lacking financial resources, little of their plans saw implementation to any degree. In common they had the belief that state education had to be re-Islamised, but in practice the period saw a decline of state education to the benefit of community and private education.

The post-2001 period started with very high hopes in state education as part of fast tracking Afghanistan to development and rejoining the international community. Demand for secular education was high even in the villages and there was an initial rush to re-establish schools. The Afghan government however had an ambiguous position vis-à-vis state education: it stressed the importance of primary education its nation-building role in shaping the views of the new generations. However, at the same time it badly under-managed the re-establishment of state education. The politicians at the centre and in the provinces seem to have viewed the Ministry of Education (MoE) more as a huge source of patronage than as a tool for nation-building, let alone a service to the population. Widespread corruption and nepotism contributed to weaken whatever effort the government put together. The contradictions of the 1960s and 1970s soon resurfaced: state education was too mediocre to become a source of support for the central government, but sufficiently challenging to conservative interests, particularly among the clergy. State delivery of educational services remained deeply flawed after 2001, perhaps more flawed than ever when the greater availability of resources after 2001 is taken into consideration. The Ministry of Education crucially failed to assess the qualifications of its growing teachers' corps, making it very difficult to develop a policy of professional upgrading and of rewarding the more capable ones. The cost of education to families also rose quickly, partly because informal 'user fees' started to be charged, which ate considerably into household income. From about 2005, enrolment rates started to stagnate or even decline and the rising violence does not seem to have been the only cause of this trend.

By 2003, the Neo-Taliban insurgency was in full sway in parts of southern Afghanistan and rapidly expanded every year after that. State schools and teachers were one of the main targets of the insurgents and there is evidence that they were riding a wave of genuine resentment in the more conservative communities against state 'penetration' and inflexible curricula. Up to 2006, we can notice the almost perfect match between the penetration of the Taliban and rural illiteracy rates. From 2007 onwards, the response of Kabul to the challenge was increasingly inclined towards accommodation, even allowing a degree of de facto control by the Taliban over schools.

State promotion of secular education did have an impact in the villages, creating in some areas new demand for educational services and therefore forever changing the status quo in many villages. However, the present mix of half pursued agendas seems to offer the worst possible world: it creates opposition, but lacks the strength necessary to achieve positive results and mobilise that section of the population that still sees state education as an asset. Afghanistan needs a more resolute choice between two alternatives: either developing a more flexible educational system, which adapts to the demands of the communities and abandons the top-down approach, or a renewed, strengthened push for centrally managed state education, with a better selection of staff and a more capable administration in Kabul. 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. It is indeed not clear in the current political predicament who could motivate the 'army of teachers' to take up their task of nation-building with greater commitment.

1. INTRODUCTION

A young teacher from Kunduz got up one morning in 1983 – like every day of the working week – to get ready for his shift in the village school, which was near the provincial centre. Luckily for him, he did not have to start early that morning. When he left his modest home, he saw a column of smoke rising in the sky. He later found out that the mujahidin, the opposition to the pro-Soviet government of Afghanistan in those days, had attacked his school, killing some of his colleagues and setting fire to the building. Those teachers identified as supporters of the party had been specifically targeted in the attack. He was also a party member and, forced to choose between

party membership and his teaching career, he decided to turn in his party card.[1]

This episode illustrates the contentious character of education in Afghanistan. However, although the controversy over education has often been portrayed simplistically as a conflict between those who favoured secular education and those who opposed it (in the case described above, the mujahidin), the reality is more subtle. There are several dimensions to this educational controversy. One of these has to do with the dichotomy between the predominantly secular education offered by the Afghan state from the 1920s onwards (the state schools or *maktabs*) and the predominantly community-imparted religious education that had dominated unchallenged until then (the religious schools or *madrasas*). Other important dimensions include the conflict between community views on education and the desire of various governments to use education for the purpose of nation-building[2] (or simply to indoctrinate the young generations, as the mujahidin alleged the pro-Soviet government was doing); the debate over different state educational models and strategies; and the issue of the differentiated attitudes towards education across the country. From 1980 onwards, Islamic parties and factions increasingly used madrasas for the same purpose of politically motivated indoctrination as did the state, particularly in the refugee camps in Pakistan, blurring to some extent the distinction between the two sectors. Education of course is never a neutral undertaking and arguably there is always an ideology underlying it. In the case of Afghanistan, this proved particularly controversial because of the deep ideological divides and of the great rural-urban gap.

The importance of educational policies, moreover, goes beyond education as such. The development of a state educational sector with the characteristics which it acquired after its large scale roll-out in the 1960s also had a number of indirect implications for state-society relations. Schools became the main presence of the state beyond the administrative district centres, embodying the direct influence of the state in the villages; in the early years of the state education roll out to the provinces, many villagers feared that the state was, in a way, acquiring the ownership of their children. In a sense, as we shall see later, they were right. On top of the direct influence that schools ended up exercising on the mindset of pupils, teachers and school principals gradually emerged (or tried to position themselves) as a new strata of men (and women) of 'influence' among the population, often finding themselves at odds with other groups of 'men of influence': the mullahs, the community elders, the big landlords, etc. In a sense, therefore, the fate of education in Afghanistan can be taken as an indicator of the state of nation-building in the country.

The purpose of this report is not to provide an overview of all the recent and current educational policies, nor is this 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. The role of religion within education, the priority of government over community concerns, the importance attributed to universal education, the weight placed on female education, the use of the curricula for the purpose of indoctrination – in short, the deeply political and contentious history of education in Afghanistan – are some of the main themes of this educational debate. As the following paragraphs will show, they are all closely related to nation-building.

With nation-building, what I mean here is a top-down effort of a leadership to forge a single nation out of disparate communities that lack a sense of commitment to a country and a state. It is common now in developed countries to argue in favour of decentralisation and to advocate this model for export to developing countries.[3] However, historically processes of 'nation-building' have usually been similarly characterised by the imposition of the centre's views over the communities': few states (if any) have been built without some coercion and manipulation of the constituent communities.[4] Exactly because of its top-down character, nation-building is inevitably bound to trample on the aspirations and interests of the communities which have to be forged into a new nation. The liberal consensus in the twenty-first century western world tends sees such prevarications with horror, while at the same time

[1] Personal communication with MP, former teacher, Kunduz, 2004.

[2] Nation-building is here defined as the process of merging distinct, separate communities with separate identities into a new entity with a common identity. The process can be described as achieved once individuals perceive their national identity as the primary one to which their loyalty goes.

[3] Such a stand was often taken by foreign experts and observers even before the war started in 1978. See, for example, Jeanne Moulton, *An Outline of the Educational System in Afghanistan* (n.d. circa 1975), para. 4.

[4] See for example the classic Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976).

still maintaining that nation-building is a positive aim if not a necessity. Using education for indoctrination purposes has also been common in the developed world. Indeed, it is not clear how else nations can be forged out of fragmented communities in the early stages of the process of state and nation formation. This contradiction between state and community views on education is the leading theme of this paper.

The debate on nation-building and its specific character can be read as a major thread in the political history of twentieth century Afghanistan and remains a key issue in the twenty-first century. Socialism and Islamism, after all, acquired popularity among educated Afghans as alternative ways of bringing disparate communities together. The leftists believed that a nation could be forged by indoctrinating the new generation with new ideals and cutting off the influence of the old elites. The Islamists by contrasts saw the Islamisation of state education as a way to purify Afghan Islam and turn it into a factor of unity, doing away with its particularistic interpretations by a retrograde clergy. Similarly, the crises of the monarchy and of the post-Taliban regime can be interpreted in terms of failure to implement nation-building projects. The monarchy had tried to foster the cult of the king and of national heroes, all linked to the aristocracy ruling the country; Karzai's administration does not appear to have thought of the role of education in nation-building very much, at all.

Although inevitably the focus is on contemporary developments, this report provides a historical perspective; this is necessary in order to understand more recent developments. The part dedicated to historical analysis is divided into two sections, covering the monarchy (up to 1973) and the post 1978 period (from the leftist coup through to the Rabbani and Taliban regimes) respectively. The contemporary period is analysed in the three subsequent sections, of which one details the great hopes of 2001–2 (*A new beginning*), the second discusses persistent resistance to state education in society (*Persistent opposition*) and the last one deals with the limitations of the government's effort (*Flaws on the delivery side*).

Methodologically, the paper is based on a review of existing literature and on a series of interviews with teachers, members of parliament and education officials conducted between 2008 and 2009. The aim of the interviews was to get a sense of perceptions and views on the role of education in the development of the Afghan state and politics from the 1970s onwards. The purpose was not and could not be to assess in detail what Afghan teachers believe, but just to capture the political debate over education. Inevitably, for the pre-1970s period it was necessary to rely exclusively on the existing literature. 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.

2. EDUCATION AND NATION-BUILDING UNDER THE MONARCHY AND DAUD'S REPUBLIC

2.1 Slow start and acceleration, 1920s–1960s

The beginnings of 'modern education' in Afghanistan date back to the reign of Abdur Rahman Khan, towards the end of the nineteenth century,[5] but determined efforts to push it only started with Amanullah Khan in the 1920s; he tried also to establish government control over the madrasas, earning the virulent hostility of the mullahs.[6] The statistics for the period are uncertain, but while the appearance of state education was a big innovation for Afghanistan at that time, the number of teachers and schools remained modest.[7] Then, with the fall of Amanullah, the effort to establish a modern educational sector was partially rolled back. Bacha-ye Saqao (Habibullah II) closed down the schools during his short reign in 1929 and partially reopened by Nadir Khan, who however abolished government control over the madrasas. In 1929, only 165 teachers were active in the modern sector; in 1930, the number was down to 53.[8] Girl schools only reopened in 1943. Partly because of the lack of resources, modern education essentially stagnated during the 1930s (see Table 1); the number of enrolled pupils grew by just 12,000 between 1929 and 1940. During the 1940s, there was somewhat steadier progress, mainly due to a more determined effort towards the end of that decade. Throughout this period, the royal family sought to maintain tight control over the newly developing sector: the ministers of

[5] On the period up to Amanullah see Francis Blackiston Ward III, *Education for National Allegiance in Afghanistan* (PhD thesis, Columbia University 1978), 115 ff.
[6] Blackiston, *Education for National Allegiance,* 119 ff.
[7] Three hundred primary schools were open in 1928 according to Gul Janan Sarif, *Geschichte des afghanischen Erziehungs – und Bildungswesens* (Marburg, Most-Verlag 2004), 113.
[8] Michael Gellinck Sullivan, *Schooling and National Integration in Afghanistan* (PhD thesis, University of Pittsburgh 1973), 63.

education from 1922 to the late 1940s were prominent personalities close to the crown.[9] The real take off started in the 1960s and by the 1970s the roll-out of education to the country was well under way and the estimated enrolment ratio was over 30 per cent.

2.2 Neglect for the villages

The data shown in Table 1 does not tell the full story. Although the 1960s and 1970s were in some ways the most successful period of primary education in Afghanistan, the effort to roll out education was flawed in a number of ways. For the purposes of this report, it is important to highlight that much of the progress done since the 1940s in rolling out education to the Afghan population was concentrated in the cities. Until the 1950s, there was hardly any 'modern' education available for villagers, except for those living close to cities and towns. Only during the second half of the 1960s, did the effects of the state's commitment of more resources to rural education start to be visible in terms of students/teacher ratios. The quality of the teachers remained a problem, as insufficient numbers of teachers were available (Table 2) and as qualified teachers were hostile to serving in the villages, particularly remote ones.[10]

Since the state administration stopped at the district centre level and police rarely ventured into the villages, the direct presence of the state in the villages from the 1950s was mostly limited to teachers. They turned therefore into key actors of the state-building process. A 1973 survey found that prospective teachers at the university saw themselves 'as representatives of a new modern way of life which, if transmitted to poor people, will allow them to improve their life.'[11] However, already at this time the educated class was showing a limited interest in the 'mission of teaching', particularly if that implied getting a job in the provinces; in the 1960s about half of all Afghans with modern education worked at the MoE, but mostly in bureaucratic positions.[12] Few educated teachers turned up in the villages, as the educated class resisted deployment outside the towns and the state had to rely on unqualified literate villagers to teach in the villages. Qualified teachers could mainly be found in villages near the towns or the main highways. To the extent that teachers did end up teaching to the rural population, the encounter was not trouble free. Their education in the cities (where all the teacher training institutes and secondary schools were located) and their own vested interest set them up for a confrontation with the mullahs in particular; their ambition to compete for influence at the local level often led to friction with the elders too.

2.3 Quality and commitment of teachers

Although, nowadays, old teachers and the public in Afghanistan have fond memories of the teachers of the 1960s and 1970s,[13] external surveyors had little positive to say about the quality and commitment of the majority of teachers, at the time.[14] During the 1960s, the average qualification of teachers in primary schools was clearly very modest, although significantly better than in the early 1950s, as shown in Table 2.

During the 1970s, the output of the teacher training institutes was beginning to make itself felt and the quality of teachers increased, not least because prospective teachers were allowed to skirt military service as an incentive. The fact that the government continued to open more schools limited the qualitative impact of having more trained teachers at its disposal. The government departments involved with education were also reported to be badly coordinated; for example, the Curriculum Department, the Teacher Education Department and Teaching Materials Production did not cooperate effectively.[15] Teachers' salaries were well below a 'middle income', although they were supplemented by coupons giving access to subsidised food.[16] Although interferences and threats to the work of teachers were well publicised from 1978 onwards, in reality they occurred even before:

> If the son or daughter of influential parents fails an exam, subtle pressure or not-so-subtle threats and bribes descend on the poor teacher.[17]

[9] Saif R. Samady, *Education and Afghan Society in the Twentieth Century* (Paris: UNESCO, Education Sector, November 2001), 30–1.
[10] The Public School Survey and Planning Team, *Public School Education in Afghanistan* (United States Operations Missions to Afghanistan, n.d. circa 1968).
[11] Sullivan, *Schooling and National Integration,* 154 (see FN 8).
[12] Blackiston, *Education for National Allegiance,* 129 (see FN 5).
[13] Interviews with teachers and former teachers from various provinces of Afghanistan, 2008–9.
[14] Moulton, *An Outline* (see FN 3).
[15] Draft report on a visit to Afghanistan by R. Sanderud, UNESCO adviser to UNICEF, and P.C. Pooran, ILO adviser to UNICEF (19–23 June 1977), 3.
[16] Blackiston, *Education for National Allegiance,* 131 (see FN 5).
[17] Louis Durpree, 'The Peace Corps in Afghanistan', *AUFS Report, South Asia Series*, vol VIII no 4 (1964): 7.

2.4 Lack of political will

Overall, the indications are that education *per se* was not treated as a major priority during this period. The quality of education seems to have been of little concern. This is understandable when we consider that the private sector offered few opportunities to educated people. Nor did the government have a coherent or viable economic development policy beyond infrastructural development with aid money. The limited skills imparted by the educational system sufficed for employment in the state apparatus; moreover, many secondary school and university graduates could not find jobs in the state machinery. Indeed, by 1978 70 per cent of secondary school graduates were unemployed.[18] The government instead viewed the educational system as a tool of nation-making, or a least as a tool of indoctrination. The two aims usually overlapped, sometimes nation-building taking precedence, more often indoctrination prevailing. An example of how this rejection of predominant communal attitudes was accompanied by an, at best half-hearted, investment in nation-building was the attitude towards girls' education. Opposition to girls' education played an important role in stirring opposition to Amanullah Khan in the 1920s, a fact which helps explain the caution of successive governments. Although as we have seen opposition was not limited to girls' schools, girls' education acted as a polarising issue because it served the purpose of discrediting the government's position among conservative villagers. The royal government had a policy of opening girls schools only on request of a particular community and was not proactive in encouraging girls' education or in providing adequate facilities even when demand was strong.[19] This resulted in huge disparities when we look at the provincial and language breakdown of girls' enrolment ratios (Tables 4 and 5). As it can easily be noted, girls' enrolment ratios were the lowest in the south and south-east, were somewhat higher in the east and substantially higher in the west (particularly Herat) and north (particularly Faryab). Although the presence of a large city clearly helped drag girls' enrolment rates higher, this can not alone explain the divergent patterns. The ruling elite's lack of determination to push for its avowed nation-building agenda was illustrated in its home province of Kandahar, which lagged behind. In general, the data seems to suggest different attitudes among the many 'societies' which compose Afghanistan. The relevant point here is that regional differences in girls' education, in the long term, affected nation-building as defined by the central government, in part by delaying the overall pace of educational development (the role of educated mothers in fostering the education of their children is of paramount importance) and in part by allowing large pockets of conservatism to survive more or less untouched.

2.5 Local resistance

The communities' demands were sacrificed on the altar of 'national cohesion', which was the official reason given for not using in education languages such as Uzbek, Turkmen, Nooristani etc. 'In a society where the parents were unused to the concept of modern nationalism, it was necessary for the teachers and the curriculum to provide youth with the values and symbols that make patriots'.[20] The communities, in general, did not oppose education, but in many rural areas their demands appear to have focused on an educational system adapted to their immediate needs: educating mullahs and imparting notions of good behaviour to the children, particularly males. Episodes of resistance to state education were common throughout Afghan history; even in the 1950s and 1960s not only demonstrations or attacks on schools occurred, but many khans showed their opposition by refusing to enrol their children in the state schools, particularly in southern Afghanistan. Opposition to schools was by no means limited to the enrolment of girls:

> [m]ore than occasionally, fathers tried to prevent their sons being taken to school. Fathers would hide their sons, attempt bribery to keep their sons out of school, and even pay poor men to send their sons to school as substitutes.
>
> Most of the children who entered the school were the sons of poor people who could not avoid doing so. The people of this province thought of school as a place for misleading children.[21]

Maliks were often opposed to state education, refused to send their own children and tried to dissuade families from sending children too. Mullahs had a similar reaction. Economic motivations also figured prominently among the

[18] Nancy Hatch Dupree, 'Patterns in the Context of an Emergency', *Refuge* 17 no 4 (October 1998).
[19] The Public School Survey and Planning Team, *Public School Education,* 117 (see FN 10).
[20] Samady, *Education and Afghan Society,* 13 (see FN 9); Blackiston, *Education for National Allegiance,* 137 (see FN 5).
[21] Sullivan, *Schooling and National Integration*, 69–71, 73–5 (see FN 8).

causes of reluctance to send children to school, as many households needed them to aid in the fields or at home.

One example of the rejection of the attitudes predominant among the communities in favour of Kabul's views is the predominantly secular character of the curricula. Although the state leaned towards secular education, in reality state schools dedicated a significant portion of teaching time to religion, around 15 per cent (Table 3), just much less than many communities seemed to demand.[22] Moreover, the various governments tried to exercise some control over madrasas or to establish a state-sponsored madrasa sector, but such attempts were generally resisted.[23] The problem, therefore, could be said to be one of state interference rather than just one of religious versus secular education. It is worth mentioning that the rivalry between state teachers and mullahs teaching in madrasas did not strictly follow a left-right divide. Teachers of Islamist inclinations in state schools often shared with their leftist colleagues' distaste for the mullahs, whom they considered ignorant and presumptuous.[24] They did not believe so much in expanding the number of hours of religious studies, as in giving the pupils an Islamic interpretation of the modern sciences.

2.6 Nation-building in the curricula

A look at the textbooks shows how successive governments have tried to use them to promote their own visions and interpretations of the history of the country, although sometime not very effectively.[25] After liberal ideas made their way to the textbooks in the 1920s, following the 1928–9 civil war, the approach became more cautious: religion was reintroduced as a prime focus of public education and nation-building principles were de-emphasised. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the main political concern of the textbooks was developing reverence for the royal family and a number of 'national heroes'. The post World War II period was more confused in this regard, as the uncoordinated import of material from western textbooks failed to deliver a clear message to teachers and students.[26] During the 1950s, the idea of coordinated curriculum planning and specific educational objectives established itself for the first time in Afghanistan, even if the monarchy never developed a coherent national ideology. Respect for the royal family and love for the Afghan nation became explicit objectives of education and the textbooks complied with the exaltation of aspects of Afghan history and other patriotic themes.[27] The textbooks were also a vehicle for 'modernisation', as they depicted respectable people in western clothes and furniture and houses were western looking too.[28]

Sometimes, the textbooks incorporated elements of political indoctrination. For example, the fifth grade textbook of 1970 failed to mention Amanullah Khan at all. The fourth grade village textbook of 1963 mentioned Amanullah and his reforms, but without elaboration. Characteristically in the 1970s, Pashtunistan was described as if it was a *de jure* state; the language of the people of Pashtunistan was described as 'the same as that of Afghans'.[29] The 1972 fifth grade textbook described how Ahmad Shah (i.e., 'we') defeated the Uzbeks; by then the view of Amanullah's role had changed and was now assessed more positively. Only in 1972, did the textbooks start showing the ethnic breakdown of the country. Some signs of an effort to stimulate a sense of brotherhood among Afghans emerged now, but 'the history of the last three centuries remained a history of Pashtuns'.[30] Daud's first move in 1973 was to have any reference to the monarchy deleted from the textbooks; the decision was implemented very efficiently even in the most remote schools, suggesting an unsuspected ability of the MoE to act quickly in the presence of strong political directives.[31] Amanullah now received a very positive treatment. The racial theories of the Aryan origins of the Afghan nation continued to be subscribed to in the new textbooks. Surveys showed children continued to assume that Pashtun and Afghan were complete synonyms. The subliminal message of the textbooks was that

[22] Pia Karlsson and Amir Mansory, *Islamic and Modern Education in Afghanistan – Conflictual or Complementary?* (Institute of International Education, Stockholm University), 13.
[23] Pia Karlsson and Amir Mansory, *An Afghan Dilemma: Education, Gender and Globalistion in an Islamic Context*, (doctoral thesis in international education at Stockholm university, Sweden 2007), 200.
[24] On this point see Oliver Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990). 'Islamism' is used here in Roy's sense of 'political Islam'.
[25] The review of Afghan history school textbooks was conducted by Niamatullah Ibrahimi of the Crisis States Research Centre in Kabul. The 1972, 1977, 1992, 1993 textbooks for ninth, tenth and twelfth class were covered.
[26] Blackiston, *Education for National Allegiance,* 152–4 (see FN 5).
[27] Blackiston, *Education for National Allegiance,* 155 ff, 217.
[28] Blackiston, *Education for National Allegiance,* 176.
[29] Blackiston, *Education for National Allegiance,* 195, 203–7.
[30] Blackiston, *Education for National Allegiance,* 332, 334, 336 ff.
[31] Blackiston, *Education for National Allegiance,* 414.

rebellion led to destruction and alliance with foreign powers led to defeat.[32] The textbook for twelfth grade presented Amir Abdur Rahman in a generally positive way as the unifier of the country, who crushed feudalism. His war on the Hazaras and Nuristan and other communities were presented positively and justified too, although only short references were made to these wars without real details. Leaders opposed to Abdur Rahman were generally described as rebels.[33]

2.7 Nation-building and language

Another revealing test of the nation-building policies of Kabul is the attitude towards language issues. The context of bitter European rivalries in the eighteenth through twentieth centuries, argued for a unity of culture and language as the key ingredients of a strong nation. This shaped the view of nations which Afghanistan imported in the early twentieth century. In the Afghan context, even more than in the European one, the national language was always a controversial point for a number of reasons. Although before the series of wars that started in 1978, Pashtuns were at least a plurality of the population,[34] the most commonly spoken language was Dari, as many more Pashtuns were fluent in Dari than Dari-speakers were fluent in Pashto. Particularly in the cities, speaking Dari was quite common among Pashtuns, not least because Dari was also the language of administration and of higher education. One of the paradoxes of Afghanistan until at least the late 1970s was that of a country ruled by a Pashtun elite, but culturally dominated by a language other than Pashto. While rejecting many of the views of the earlier generation of 'nationalist-modernisers',[35] in the 1930s the government identified the promotion of Pashto as a key (and politically safe) tool of nation-building. The founding father of modern Afghan nationalism, Mahmud Tarzi, described Pashto as 'the Afghan language' to be taught to all Afghans or, in Gregorian's words 'the mortar that would permit the country's ethnic mosaic to be molded into a single nation'. Following the dominant European influences of the late nineteenth century, Tarzi's idea was that a nation needed a dominant language to assert itself; like Turkey, Afghanistan could have created a strong sense of national identity based on Pashto.[36]

In 1936, a Royal Decree declared that all officials of the country had to learn Pashto as well as Dari. Prime Minister Hashim Khan in 1937 declared that state officials had three years to learn Pashto and stated his hope that Pashto would become the official language of the bureaucracy by 1938, 'doing away with Persian.' Officials had to take evening courses. The Ministry of Education included among its foremost priorities until the early 1940s the preparations for teaching Pashto in all schools. However, after this dynamic start, the efforts of the monarchy to promote Pashto as an official language alongside and even at the expense of Dari ended up being mostly half-hearted or not systematic. The initial push to establish Pashto as the only national language created strong resistance within the ranks of the bureaucracy: even Pashtuns resisted re-learning Pashto as a written language. After the Second World War, the monarchy settled for a more moderate plan of having two national languages, Dari and Pashto.[37]

Apart from the opposition of the bureaucrats, there were solid reasons for resisting Pashto as a dominant language. The rushed effort did not allow for the creation of a consensus on a national Pashto language out of disparate dialects, nor for the modernisation of Pashto into a language capable of handling the needs of mass education (and re-education) effectively and cheaply; the same could be said for modern technical uses.

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[32] Blackiston, *Education for National Allegiance,* 441, 445, 584.

[33] History textbook, twelfth grade, circa 1977, 38–39.

[34] While the exact weight of different ethnic groups was an extremely contentious issue in Afghanistan, foreign scholars tended to agree on a slight Pashtun majority until the 1970s, when a tendency to revise the percentage of Pashtuns downward started. See Vartan Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan* (Stanford University Press 1969), 25 and endnote 1, 415; Yuri V. Bosin, *Afganistan: politicheskoe obshestvo I gosudarstvennaya vlast' v istoricheskom kontekste* (Moscow: ISAA 2002), 54; E. Orywal, *Die ethnische Gruppen Afghanistan* (Wiesbaden: TAVO 1986), 70 ff.

[35] Gregorian's definition refers to Mahmud Tarzi and King Amanullah, who was heavily influenced by him.

[36] Samady, *Education and Afghan Society,* 13 (see FN 9); V. Korgun, *Istoriya Afganistana: XX vek* (Moscow: IV RAN 2004), 252; Gregorian, *The Emergence*, 175–6 (see FN 34).

[37] Thomas Ruttig, *Zur Bedeutung der bürgerlichen Oppositionsbewegung der 50er Jahre unseres Jahrhunderts für die Formierung progressiver politischer Kräfte in Afghanistan* (diploma thesis, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin 1985), 36 ff; Gregorian, *The Emergence*, 351–2 (see FN 34); Mir Hekmatullah Sadat, 'Modern Education in Afghanistan', *Lemar-Aftab* (March 2004); Sarif, *Geschichte des afghanischen,* 138–9 (see FN 7); Ella Mallart, 'Afghanistan's Rebirth: An Interview with H.R.H. Hashim Khan in 1937', *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* (April 1940), 227; Kurt Ziemke, *Als deutscher Gesandter in Afghanistan* (Stuttgart: DVA 1939), 337 ff; Mir Mohammad Siddiq Farhnag, *Afghanistan dar panj qarn akhir*, vol II (Teheran: Derakhshesh, n.d.), 631 ff.

Sufficient numbers of teachers of Pashto did not exist and Pashto textbooks were slowly developed into the 1940s. The Pashto Academy (Pashto Tolana) started work on standardising and simplifying Pashto, but never had the resources or the political impulse to get very far. In the 1950s, Pashto linguists were still discussing whether to adopt classical Pashto as the standard, official Pashto as opposed to any particular dialect.[38] University education continued almost exclusively in Dari. This, together with Dari's richer vocabulary, in terms of technical and scientific terminology, and its simpler grammar, meant that well into the 1960s and increasingly so in Kabul city and the more urbanised provinces of Balkh, Herat and Parwan, almost negligible levels of enrolment in Pashto were recorded. This fact seems to suggest that many Pashtun families were opting for schools where Dari was the first language.[39] It might also be true (as a concurrent explanation) that enrolment rates among Pashtuns were lower.[40] Here we see the double failure of the project to make Pashto into a tool of nation-building. As a result Pashtuns divided between those who gradually turned into Dari-speakers and those who opted to protect their Pashto identity, refusing state education. Many Pashtuns, particularly in Herat and Kabul, no longer speak Pashto fluently, let alone write it.

After the early 1940s, the monarchy relented in its efforts to give substance to the idea of a Pashtun-led nation, except for a period in the 1950s when Prime Minister Daud tried again to impose Pashto as the official language of the administration. As a result, in practice, despite being the ethnic group nominally in control of the state, the position of rural Pashtuns was often similar to that of the non-Dari speaking ethnicities (Turkic-language speakers, Pashais and a few others), that is, one of disadvantage, if not of discrimination, in the educational system.[41] This predicament would play an important role in shaping Afghan Pashtuns' political consciousness from the 1960s onward and would eventually give Pashtun nationalism a character of opposition to the royal elite.

Among non-Pashtuns, the case of the Uzbeks is particularly interesting. There has long been a strong interest in the pursuit of education as a route to social advancement, as shown by the figures in Table 4 about literacy in Faryab, the province in Afghanistan with the highest percentage of Uzbeks. Faryab had the highest female enrolment ratio after Kabul, and a high rural literacy rate. A UNESCO report, dated 1952, found that Uzbek pupils appeared particularly brilliant in secondary school, but they were on average two years older than the other pupils.[42] The race-oriented policies developed by the Afghan government in the 1930s (probably under the influence of Nazi Germany) discriminated against the 'Asian races', that is, all communities deemed to be non-Indo-European on the basis of their appearance. That included Uzbeks, Turkmen, Hazaras and Aimaqs, in other words, probably at least a quarter of the population. These policies excluded the 'Asian races' from the administration and from the officer corps of the army, as well as from higher education.[43] Not until the late 1950s did the first Uzbeks start trickling through the educational system and finally reach university. At this point, many Uzbek students realised that they were at a disadvantage because neither Dari nor Pashto was their mother tongue. Over time, this had the effect of radicalising the small but growing Uzbek intelligentsia. Even assimilation as Dari-speakers was never a real option because, particularly in the villages, Uzbek women only speak Uzbek and therefore raised their children as Uzbek speakers. In 2004, Uzbek teachers were reported to have trouble in teaching in Dari or

[38] See D. N. Mackenzie, 'A Standard Pashto', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol 22, no 1/3 (1959), 231–235. Blackiston, *Education for National Allegiance,* 124–5 (see FN 5); Gregorian, *The Emergence*, 355–6, 352 (see FN 34). On the problems created by the lack of standardisation in the use of Pashto within the administration see also Abdul Ghaffar Farahi, *Afghanistan during Democracy and Republic 1963–1978* (Peshawar: Area Study Centre 2004), xii; Korgun, *Istoriya Afganistana,* 252 (see FN 36).

[39] In Kabul city, only 5 per cent of pupils were enroled in Pashto schols in 1964 and just 2 per cent in 1969. In Herat, there were no Pashto schools in 1969, despite the fact that at least a third of the province's population was Pashtun. In Balkh, the percentage of pupils in Pashto schools declined from 15 per cent to 6 per cent between 1964 and 1969 (based on official statistics for the years 1964, 1967 and 1969).

[40] There is evidence of this for the later period: In 2002 it was reported that the reluctance of Pashtun parents to enrol children in Tajik-dominated schools was keeping Pashtun presence in the schools of northern Afghanistan low. At this time, however, ethnic tension was particularly high in the region. See *UNHCR Returnee Monitoring Report: Afghanistan Repatriation January 2002 – March 2003*, 18.

[41] On this point see Sarif, *Geschichte des afghanischen,* 146–7 (see FN 7).

[42] UNESCO, *Report of the Mission to Afghanistan* (Paris 1952), 32.

[43] Gregorian, *The Emergence*, 345 ff (see FN 34); A.B. Orishev, *Politika Fashistkoi Germanii v Afganistane* (Moscow: Elets 2000), 52 ff; Bosin, *Afganistan: politicheskoe obshestvo,* 109 ff (see FN 34); C. Schetter, *Ethnizität und ethnische Konflikte in Afghanistan*, (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag 2003), 256 ff.

Pashto and often reverted to their mother tongue Uzbek in the classrooms.[44]

In sum, until the 1970s this ambiguous and fluctuating attitude towards education may well have done more harm than good to the cause of nation-building in Afghanistan, alienating, antagonising and disappointing, rather than unifying, the people of Afghanistan. The royal government did not pursue nation-building very hard, perhaps because:

> by promoting the image of a beneficent Royal Family and nothing more, they managed to keep the various tribes apart and unable to join in rebellion. There were no bonds of brotherhood, there was only the bond to the king.[45]

The half-hearted (at best) character of the Afghan monarchy's nation-building effort during the 1960s and 1970s turned teachers into an opposition force. They tended to be pro-state, but at the same time, frequently harboured resentment against a government which was not pushing hard enough for the expansion of education or was imposing a model of education which they did not like. Favouritism and nepotism in job promotions and in the allocation of prized scholarships abroad contributed to widen the gap between government and teachers.[46] Until Daud's coup in 1973, teachers were often openly involved in political activities. From 1973 until 1978, they had to be more circumspect, but in reality the crackdown on political activism was not very effective. Among the (relatively large) minority of teachers who were politically active in the 1970s, the left dominated, although it was divided in several factions, of which Khalq, Parcham and the various Maoists groups were the largest. The Islamists were also present although in fewer numbers; conservative teachers of strong religious convictions were less likely to be interested in politics before 1978. Other groups which had some influence were the Pashtun nationalists of Afghan Millat and the tiny Democratic Party. Disenchantment with the government was widespread in the 1970s.[47]

Under Daud Khan (1973–78), nation-building and nationalist indoctrination acquired a new lease on life; the Scouting Movement was introduced in the schools and its activities revolved around nationalist indoctrination. The national flag became the object of unprecedented attention; the national anthem was included in all first grade textbooks. 'Brotherhood' among all Afghans was strongly emphasised in the educational programme.[48] It was too little and too late, however, to appease an increasingly radicalised educated youth, who felt that the government was not genuinely committed to a nationalist agenda.

3. THE 1978 TURNING POINT AND ITS AFTERMATH

3.1 The left in power and the reaction

The period 1978–1980 was a turning point for education in Afghanistan, as it was in so many other regards. The radical, pro-Soviet leftists who took power in 1978 believed in nation-building in their own way; indeed in a sense they were rebelling against the failure of the previous government to go very far in that direction. They believed that to achieve this aim, the old elites had to be marginalised or crushed and that education could be one of their battle horses in a strategy to separate the rural population from the rural elites – landlords and notables whom they aimed to undermine. They wanted to seize influence over the new generation by turning the schools into pulpits; many Khalqis,[49] in particular, were teachers and already at odds with the clerical and secular elites in the villages and the towns. Mostly secondary school graduates who had not been able to secure access to university or to a job in the cities, the Khalqi 'angry young men' ended up retaliating violently against the rural elites at the first sign of resistance. Those signs of resistance came soon as the Khalqis set up the more conservative parts of the countryside for a violent reaction when they started pushing for mixed boys and girls classes and using the schools to spread their radical views. This was in addition to engaging in land redistribution and other reforms. Their confidence in the army's ability to crush any resistance was misplaced, however, and government control over the countryside started slipping.

An even more important turning point was, however, the entry of the Soviet army into the

[44] Interviews with Uzbek intellectuals, London 2003 and Kabul 2005; Jeaniene Spink, *Teacher Education and Professional Development in Afghanistan* (Kabul: AREU 2004), 31.
[45] Blackiston, *Education for National Allegiance,* 216–20 (see FN 5).
[46] Sadat, 'Modern Education' (see FN 37).
[47] Sullivan, *Schooling and National Integration,* 87–8, 157 (see FN 8).
[48] Blackiston, *Education for National Allegiance,* 406, 415–6 (see FN 5).
[49] The two main factions of the Hizb-i Demokratik-i Khalq in 1978 were Khalq and Parcham; the first emerged as the dominant one during 1978 and was the more radical wing.

country at the end of December 1979, which turned the conflict into a generalised resistance movement. The figures in Table 1 show how, in 1980 the enrolment ratio (children enrolled as percentage of all children) in schools was still very high, even compared to the 1970s. Indeed the enrolment ratio peaked in 1980 – the culmination of decades of efforts and steady increases; however, a precipitous decline started immediately afterwards. In fact, many of the students enrolled in that year never attended or soon stopped doing so. The civil war which had been in incubation during 1978–79 was in full fledge by the summer of that year, while the Soviet occupation added a character of national resistance to the fighting. From early 1980 onwards, the erosion of government control over the countryside accelerated. Although a precise figure is difficult to give because of massive population displacement, by 1990 the enrolment ratio can be estimated to have almost halved (Table 1). Apart from the destruction of thousands of schools and the killing of thousands of teachers by both sides in the conflict, education also suffered because many teachers quit their jobs. Many joined the government, particularly in 1978–79 when the Khalqis took power and promoted many of their supporters to government positions; others joined the fight on both sides. Teachers, as a category, were brutalised by the war in many ways. From being nation-builders under the monarchy (which the republic and the leftists – to various degrees and in various ways – also encouraged) they turned into fighters and killers. Some of the armed opposition groups, like Hizb-i Islami and, to a lesser extent, Jamiat-i Islami, recruited among educated people and students and therefore attracted many state-sector teachers of conservative or religious inclinations. Teachers of leftist inclinations sometimes joined the Maoist opposition, or more often fought on the government side. Some of the pro-government militia commanders most famous for their ruthlessness had been teachers, like Amanullah, a Tajik teacher of Balkh who joined the militias to avenge his wife and children who the mujahidin had murdered for being the family of a teacher. Amanullah's militia became famous as Gilam Jam, the 'carpet baggers', because of its inclination to loot.[50]

The high turnover rate among teachers, together with the limited number of available replacements, had negative repercussions in terms of the quality and skills of the teacher corps, despite rapidly increasing investment in the profession. By 1986, of 22,000 teachers in service (primary and secondary), only 0.2 per cent had higher education, with 6.2 per cent having incomplete higher education, 36.8 per cent pedagogical degrees (2-year courses), 51.2 per cent secondary education, 5.1 per cent incomplete secondary education and 0.6 per cent religious degrees.[51] By awakening the dormant opposition of rural communities to the imposition of a model of state and nation from above, the Khalqis achieved the exact opposite of what they aimed for: undoing whatever modest progress nation-building had made in Afghanistan.

3.2 Reform ambitions without fulfilment

Because of its ideological drive, the leftist governments in the 1980s, made some effort to promote education in various minority languages, such as Uzbek and Turkmen, but the experiment did not go very far due to the lack of logistical (textbooks, teacher training, etc.) and financial resources.[52] Indeed, despite the stronger level of control exercised by the government in the north of the country, Uzbeks remained under-represented among pupils and teachers. The ethnic imbalance of the teacher corps made this inevitable. Pashtuns were affected too. In the mid-1980s, the ethnic breakdown of primary education showed a domination by Tajiks:[53]

	students (%)	teachers (%)
Tajiks	42.0	68.5
Pashtuns	37.0	23.0
Uzbeks	5.0	4.5
Turkmens	6.0	n.a.
Hazaras	5.5	n.a.
others	0.5	4.0

The success in increasing the enrolment ratio of girls to unprecedented levels in the areas under the government's firmer control, that is, in some cities (Kabul, Mazar, Jalalabad and Shiberghan mainly), came at the price of almost entirely sacrificing the education of girls (and to a large extent of boys too) in the rural areas. Even when the regime was able to establish a presence thanks to a range of militias and locally negotiated deals,

[50] Interviews with teachers and former teachers in various provinces of Afghanistan, 2008–9.

[51] E.P. Belozertsev, *Narodnoe obrazovanie v respublike Afganistan* (Moscow: Pedagogika 1988), 61.

[52] Samady, *Education and Afghan Society,* 13 (see FN 9).

[53] Belozertsev, *Narodnoe obrazovanie*, 57 (see FN 51).

little happened in terms of re-establishing the education system. Security was often not good enough to despatch teachers there. In fact, even in the cities and their surrounding environs, the assassination of teachers remained far from rare well into the 1980s. Government figures showed that by the end of 1983, the opposition had physically assaulted 9,000 teachers. By October 1986 2,000 had been killed.[54] Another reason for being unable to rebuild the educational system outside the cities was that the arbitrary rule of the pro-government militias created an unpredictable and unfriendly environment. Even if the militias, mostly former mujahidin themselves, did not assassinate teachers, bullying was quite common. Civilian members of the ruling party were also mostly organised in militias and were not always very disciplined. Many secondary school teachers, particularly those who were not themselves party members, resented the presence of armed pupils in their classrooms; cases of teachers threatened by their pupils were known.[55] The growing educational gap between cities and countryside, created by the fighting, also played against any notion of nation-building.

3.3 Nation-building and political indoctrination

Like its predecessors, the leftist regime manipulated the textbooks for its own purposes. The history textbook adopted by the leftist government in 1986 for the tenth grade described Habibullah II[56] negatively as a reactionary figure who disrupted the reform and progressive process led by Amanullah Khan.[57] This view was in line with previous texts but politicised the criticism of Habibullah II, who had previously been cast as a thief.[58] Daud was praised for his initial policy of working with the 'progressive forces', but criticised for fluctuating between the 'national bourgeoisie' and the 'feudal forces'. His 'class identity' prevented him from working with the 'democratic forces' (i.e., the left) in the long term.[59] Secondary school textbooks now used concepts like 'historical materialism', discussed politics and focused the study of geography on the Soviet Union.[60] The leftist textbooks nonetheless demonstrated an unprecedented sensitivity to ethnic issues by being critical of Amir Abdur Rahman. The ninth grade textbook accused him of planting the seeds of disunity and hostility amongst ethnic groups by mobilizing one against the other. The textbook described in detail the Hazara, Nuristan and Turkestan wars as well as Pashtun rebellions and power struggles and concluded that Amir Abdur Rahman Khan overwhelmed his foes through terror and bloodshed. The despotic state that he established was based on threat, spying, imprisonment, torture and mass execution.[61]

3.4 Chaos under Rabbani, 1992–1996

By 1992, following the collapse of the pro-Soviet regime, the educational system in Afghanistan was in an awful state. The Rabbani government, which established itself from 1992 onwards, dominated as it was by Islamists, had its own interpretation of nation-building based on Islam. The Rabbani government adopted the American-designed and heavily politicised curriculum used in the refugee camps in the 1980s. It conceived a plan to bridge the gap between modern and religious education by increasing the hours of religious subjects in the maktabs and the hours of modern subjects in the madrasas, as well as establishing a thicker network of government madrasas in the provinces. However, the general decay of the educational sector in those years overwhelmed the plan.[62] Resources were allocated to war fighting, not education. Education in Kabul collapsed as the capital turned into a battleground among roaming militias. The presence in the classrooms of students carrying weapons, which had been exceptional under the leftist regime, became very common and so were direct threats to teachers, no longer mediated through the party apparatus of the regime. Discipline collapsed and many students managed to get their diploma without passing exams. Some commanders and groups were hostile to female teachers, although the more enlightened wing of the Rabbani government tried to allow them to work.[63] On the positive side, the rural areas were re-opened to education; the number of enrolled children stagnated at around 700,000, although precise statistics do not exist as

[54] Antonio Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan, 1978–1992* (C. Hurst and Georgetown University Press, London 2000), 23.
[55] Interviews with teachers in Herat, October 2009, and Faryab, March 2009.
[56] A rebel who conquered the throne for nine months during the 1928–29 civil war and the only Tajik king of Afghanistan.
[57] The modernist and reformist king who was overthrown in 1929 by Habibullah.
[58] History textbook, tenth grade, 1986, 61–65.
[59] History textbook, tenth grade, 162.
[60] Karlsson and Mansory, *An Afghan Dilemma*, 170 (see FN 23).
[61] History textbook, ninth grade, Kabul 1986, 47–56.
[62] Karlsson and Mansory, *An Afghan Dilemma*, 172, 316–7 (see FN 23); interviews with teachers in various provinces, 2008–9.
[63] Interview with member of parliament from Parwan, March 2009.

Rabbani was not able to re-establish a functioning central government and the country was soon engulfed in civil war.[64] The Rabbani government did not carry out major purges among the teachers, contrary to what its leftist predecessors had done, nor did it need to do so. In some areas, purges of secular elements from the educational system had already happened during the jihad.[65] The already depleted ranks of the teacher corps suffered again as many fled when the mujahidin took power or simply quit their jobs because of the increasingly unsatisfying economic package. Although salaries kept being paid, food coupons were abolished and spending on infrastructure completely ground to a halt. Former mujahidin, many of whom even became head teachers, regardless of their educational background, filled most of the gaps.[66] The role of NGOs in providing education became particularly important during this and the later Taliban period, as their schools were better funded than government ones.

The manipulation of the textbooks continued under Rabbani, whose government mostly adopted the highly ideological texts used in the refugee camps in the 1980s, but also produced its own history textbooks. The twelfth grade history book of condemned Daud Khan for having facilitated the communist takeover (1978) allowing for gradual Soviet infiltration during his premiership and presidency.[67] By contrast, Habibullah II (Bacha-ye Saqao, 1929), the only Tajik ruler of Afghanistan before Rabbani, was presented quite positively as somebody with high ambitions and an understanding of the pains of Muslim people, who defused communist plans and delayed them for another 60 years.[68] The textbook also described Abdur Rahman positively for achieving national unity and defeating rebels. 'Rebel' Hazaras are singled out, as well as the 'infidels' of Nuristan whom he forcefully converted to Islam,[69] perhaps a reminder of Rabbani's difficult relationship with the Hazara leadership of Hizb-i Wahdat; soon the two were fighting on opposite sides in the civil war. However, due to lack of skills and investment, the attempts to revise the political and ideological content of the textbooks were often carried out clumsily:

> [m]ilitant Islamic ideas became incorporated into underlying Communist ideology together with the earlier text versions of biased Pashtun histories and cultures. Students continued to learn of the importance of Trade Unions as well as studying the 'revolution' histories of foreign countries, such as China, France and the Soviet Union. Afghan history still only revered the histories of the Pashtun Amirs and Kings, whilst instilling in the minds of children a mistrust of the descendants of Ali (the Shi'a sect of Islam) and hatred of all non-Muslims.[70]

3.5 The Taliban's plans, 1996–2001

As a result of these vicissitudes, the arrival of the Taliban in 1996 did not represent such a major turning point for education as might have been expected. They (almost) unified the system by conquering the various enclaves of the country, except for the north-eastern corner which remained under Rabbani's control. The overall enrolment rate increased somewhat to nearly 900,000 as a result of greater security. In the state schools, the Taliban increased the weight of religious subjects to about 50 per cent of teaching time (Table 3).[71] They continued to pay salaries, which however were badly eroded by inflation. The Taliban also launched their own model of state education, sponsoring private madrasas and using them to incorporate modern subjects in the curriculum. The experiment was not successful, as it proved impossible to quickly recruit sufficient numbers of adequately trained madrasa teachers who could follow the new model. According to Karlsson and Mansory, much of the population does not have very positive memories of this aspect of the Taliban regime.[72] Although the Islamisation of state education might have been appreciated in some quarters, the old style madrasas were more respected as the non-religious subjects were often badly taught in the new model madrasas. Some professional teachers also felt sufficiently humiliated by the attitude and the demands of the Taliban to quit their jobs.[73] The Taliban also notoriously closed girls' schools in the cities, leading to a nearly two-thirds collapse in

[64] *EFA 2000 Afghanistan*, UNESCO in cooperation with UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, Save the Children Fund (USA), and the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, 89.
[65] Personal communication with Kate Clark, March 2010.
[66] Interview with member of parliament from Parwan, Kabul, March 2009.
[67] History textbook, twelfth grade, circa 1993, 57–61.
[68] History textbook, twelfth grade, 48.
[69] History textbook, twelfth grade, 44–45.
[70] Jeaniene Spink, 'Education and Politics in Afghanistan: The Importance of an Education System in Peacebuilding and Reconstruction', *Journal of Peace Education* 2 no 2 (September 2005): 199.
[71] Karlsson and Mansory, *Islamic and Modern Education*, 13 (see FN 22).
[72] Karlsson and Mansory, *An Afghan Dilemma*, 163, 309 (see FN 23).
[73] Interview with school principal in Herat, October 2009.

girls' enrolment. In some areas of the countryside, NGOs continued to educate girls, while in the cities private and semi-underground education continued, sometimes protected by local communities, preventing a complete disappearance of girls' education. In 1999, the Taliban also reopened some girls' schools in the cities, following intense international pressure.[74] The schools used the 1980s refugee camps curricula and only educated pre-pubescent girls. There was a fundamental ambiguity in the attitude of the Taliban towards the education of girls: many of their 'cadres' were not too keen on a complete ban on education for girls and ignored the directives coming from the centre to shut schools down. Indeed quite a few Taliban ministers and governors were secretly sending their daughters to NGO schools. Only towards the end of the Taliban regime did ideological radicalisation seem to be leading towards a more strictly enforced ban on girls' education.[75] The Taliban also followed the Rabbani government in their complete neglect of investment in education (as well as civilian government functions in general); during this period only two teachers' training institutes kept functioning, while the quality of training continued to decline.[76] Neglect and lack of resources during the Taliban time led to a decay of the administrative and policymaking capabilities of the MoE as well. By 2002, the staffing of some departments was largely depleted; unsurprisingly the Building and Construction Department suffered more than most and its staff dropped from 411 to 50 during the Taliban.[77]

In sum, the net result of years of alternating governments with radically differing views of education was to create major generational ruptures; the attitudes of those educated under the different regimes differed substantially, as it will be shown below, creating new fault lines with deleterious effects on nation-building.

4. 2001, A NEW BEGINNING?

4.1 High hopes

The post-Taliban period started with great hopes, particularly as far as education was concerned. The combination of the Taliban's highly restrictive attitudes towards education and of international intervention created a demand for education higher than ever, even if a changing, more positive attitude towards education was noted in the early 1970s already.[78] The experience of exile abroad (particularly in Iran) favoured more 'enlightened' attitudes towards education, including mixed education of boys and girls. Parents who had been exposed to secular education before seemed more likely to adopt liberal attitudes concerning the education of their children, particularly if they had attended the schools of the pro-Soviet regime in the 1980s. Early UNHCR reports based on meetings with elders suggested that parent support for the education of girls was stronger among Hazaras and Ismailis, but also high in the north-east and in Paktia, and relatively high even in Kandahar, Helmand, Nimruz and Zabul, although was much lower in many other parts of the country.[79] Even illiterate women were reportedly beginning to see secular education as an important indirect tool to improve their lot:

> [a] mother of nine children, who has no formal education herself but whose four boys and two girls are presently in school, noted the following: School has so many benefits. For example, my sons who have studied in school are now wise and clever. They know the rights of their mother, wives and sisters, and they respect me very much. But you should see the other people of the village who are illiterate. They don't know the rights of women and they treat them like animals. . . .[80]

Significantly, after 2001 families started showing an increased preference for educated girls as marriage partners for their sons.[81] Literate village women were sometimes allowed greater freedom of movement than their illiterate sisters, on the grounds that they were considered more responsible.[82]

[74] Asian Development Bank, *A New Start for Afghanistan's Education Sector*, South Asia Department (April 2003), 17; *EFA 2000*, 20.
[75] Personal communicaton with Anders Fange of the SCA, Kabul, October 2009.
[76] Asian Development Bank, *A New Start*, 17; *EFA 2000*, 19–20 (see FN 74).
[77] Asian Development Bank, *A New Start,* 25–6 (see FN 74).
[78] Sullivan, *Schooling and National Integration,* 75 ff (see FN 8).
[79] Karlsson and Mansory, *An Afghan Dilemma*, 308 (see FN 23). The attitude in the 1970s had been very different: see Blackiston, *Education for National Allegiance,* 133–4 (see FN 5); *UNHCR Returnee Monitoring Report*, 18 (see FN 40).
[80] Pamela Hunte, *Household Decision-Making and School Enrolment in Afghanistan. Case Study 1: Chahar Asyab District, Kabul Province* (Kabul: AREU 2005), 16–17.
[81] Karlsson and Mansory, *An Afghan Dilemma*, 274 (see FN 23).
[82] Karlsson and Mansory, *An Afghan Dilemma*, 287 (see FN 23).

In particular, the prospect of externally funded reconstruction made many Afghans think that modern education would now offer unprecedented employment prospects. Education was now seen as a way to lift families out of poverty and enhance social status, whereas the stagnating economies of the 1960s and 1970s and the war-ravaged one of the 1980s and 1990s hardly encouraged investment in 'modern' education. This is also confirmed by the popularity of private schools and privately run courses in computing skills and English language, not just in Kabul but also in the provinces.[83] As one report, commenting on the early days of post-Taliban Afghanistan pointed out:

> [d]espite an almost total lack of resources and teacher salary arrears of more than 6 months, thousands of Afghan teachers and students are registering for classes. Students and teachers congregated in schools weeks before they opened, helping with repairs and feeding on the excitement of being able to resurrect them. Parents are eager to return their children to school. This commitment to education will be an important force for rebuilding the system.[84]

The statistics about the number of schools, of teachers and of enrolled pupils were encouraging. Perhaps one of the most encouraging aspects of the post-2001 predicament has been that schools were established in every corner of the country and as a result:

> [e]ven if the quality of education is not good, everywhere in Afghanistan some boys and girls are reading books.[85]

Although the attitude of communities and families to the arrival (or re-establishment) of state schools varied, on the whole it seems clear that attendance of madrasas initially declined as a result.[86] In many areas, madrasas had closed or were trailing with low attendance levels.[87] In some areas, children were sent to attend both maktabs and madrasas, while a minority refused to send children to state schools, complaining about the insufficient weight of religion in the curricula or of the limited use of education in the context where they were living. In general, influenced by the model of urban life, as well as the importance of perceived employment opportunities, cities and villages located close to cities or the main highways proved more responsive to the offer of state education, compared with more remote communities.[88]

4.2 Softer nation-building

Given the context described above, it would appear that 2002–3 offered perhaps an unprecedented opportunity for a decisive push in nation-building through education by the new government. The more experienced and better-trained teachers, who had been working in education in the 1970s and 1980s, seemed to be aware of the role of education in nation-building and were keen to recover that role, hence their defence of a unified national curriculum.[89] The government's initial choice to focus the effort on primary and secondary education at the expense of higher education suggests it believed in strengthening the 'nation-building from above' idea: primary and secondary education is much better suited for nationalist and patriotic indoctrination than higher education. To what extent it was a conscious decision is unclear. Although donors like UNICEF and UNESCO, driven by their own views of what education in Afghanistan should look like, were pushing for a focus on primary education, few within the Afghan interim and transitional cabinets objected. Before the ongoing series of internal conflicts started in 1978, a certain balance between primary and secondary school on the one hand and higher education on the other existed. Indeed Afghanistan was investing comparatively heavily on higher education, with 43.6 per cent of the education budget going to universities in 1969, as shown in the table below. That was higher than the regional average; even in 2006–7, India, Bangladesh and Pakistan were spending little more than 20 per cent on higher education:

[83] Sippi Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, *Research Study on Youth Employment and Education Aspirations and Opportunities in Helmand and Kandahar Provinces* (research conducted on behalf of Mercy Corps, funded by DFiD Helmand Agricultural Solutions for Improved Livelihoods (HASIL) 2008).
[84] Asian Development Bank, *A New Start*, 1 (see FN 74).
[85] Interview with Shafiya Nouri, member of parliament, Parwan, Kabul March 2009.
[86] Karlsson and Mansory, *An Afghan Dilemma*, 28, 275 (see FN 23).
[87] Karlsson and Mansory, *An Afghan Dilemma*.
[88] Karlsson and Mansory, *An Afghan Dilemma*, 29.
[89] Dakmara Georgescu, 'Primary and Secondary Curriculum Development in Afghanistan', *Prospects* 37(2007): 439. The aim of fostering Afghan identity was actually stated among the aims of education by the *New Curriculum Framework*, draft (Kabul 2002), 11.

	India (2007)	Bangladesh (2007)	Pakistan (2006)	Afghanistan (2010)	Afghanistan (1969)
pre-primary	1				
primary	36	43	38	89.3	56.4
secondary	43	44	23.9		
tertiary	20	12	20.6	10.7	43.6

Notes: Figures shown are percentages of education budgets.
Excludes professional education.
Source: National budgets

The result was a university level education which was much better than primary education in Afghanistan and compared well with the regional standards. During the 1980s, the stress on higher education grew even stronger because of *force majeure*: being unable to expand primary education beyond the few enclaves it controlled, the besieged leftist regime focused on higher education. It might not have been in line with its original ideological aims, but at least allowed the regime to create its own, loyal middle class of professionals and cadres.

Leaving aside the 1990s as years of general decay of education in Afghanistan, the post-2001 phase saw a complete inversion of the trend, with primary and secondary education getting the lion's share of state expenditure and higher education collapsing to a mere 10.7 per cent share by 2010. The price to be paid was high as Afghan universities, from having been near the top of the regional league tables in the 1970s, now found themselves near the bottom. The stress on primary and secondary education might have made sense as an effort to re-unify the nation. The new government must have hoped that going back to the formula of the 1960s and 1970s would guarantee a smooth path to success. The NGO lobby argued that a more 'community friendly' approach to education would enhance the acceptability of girls' education. Experiments in promoting girls' education by NGOs were found to achieve success when relying on:

> a curriculum that included Islam; female teachers for older girls; the good reputation of the organisation; and long, well established contacts with rural elders and village shuras,[90]

although it is also true the quality of the education often left much to be desired.[91] Instead, as before the war, the MoE opted to resume an extremely centralised approach. Some observers who were in Afghanistan at that time even recall reputedly good community and NGO schools being closed down in favour of lower-quality state ones.[92] Any opposition from the more conservative sections of the rural population was probably expected to be relatively easy to isolate and marginalise through a soft-handed approach. School attendance, for example, although in principle compulsory, was not implemented forcefully,[93] while mixed boys and girls classes were not imposed. The hours of religion were initially cut down again to under 10 per cent of the timetable, but after some protests they were brought up again to close to 15 per cent.[94] Teachers even seem to have been trying to hide the fact that the new curriculum contained a major reduction in the number of hours dedicated to religion.[95] Still, the soft approach turned out not to be enough.

4.3 Persistent opposition

Significantly, the only point where the donors faced resistance to imposing their views on how to proceed with the rehabilitation of the educational system was on the issue of religious education and textbooks. Following accusations that the neglect of religious textbooks would be interpreted as an attempt by foreigners to surreptitiously impose a completely secular model, conservative groups dragged their feet and managed to force UNICEF to pay for the development of Islamic textbooks under the control of conservative groups.[96] The incorporation of many mullahs in the payroll of the MoE, not just to teach religious matters but also early literacy classes, may have played a role in

[90] Karlsson and Mansory, *An Afghan Dilemma*, 10 (see FN 23).
[91] Juiaan R. Lahr with Sippi Azerbaijani Moghaddam, *Assessment Report on Primary and Secondary Education in Afghanistan for the European Commission* (Rapid Reaction Mechanism, Directorate External Relations 2002), 17.
[92] Personal communication with Kate Clark, March 2010.
[93] Karlsson and Mansory, *An Afghan Dilemma*, 269, note 185 (see FN 23).
[94] Interview with Amir Mansory, SCA, Kabul, October 2009.
[95] Karlsson and Mansory, *An Afghan Dilemma*, 277 (see FN 23).
[96] Roozbeh Shirazi, 'Islamic Education in Afghanistan: Revisiting the United States' Role', *CR: The New Centennial Review*, vol 8 no 1 (2008), 211–233, 228.

softening clerical opposition to state schools, even if (in the words of a former head of education) 'these were relatively enlightened mullahs.'[97] Nonetheless, the evidence is that, despite what elders might have stated to UNHCR officials in 2002 about the desire for secular education (see above), the old patterns of diverging attitudes towards education were still well present in 2002–3, at a time when the Neo-Taliban insurgency was still in incubation almost everywhere except Zabul province. Table 6 shows the disparity in the enrolment ratios of girls and boys outside the main cities. Conservative opposition to state education was alive everywhere even though in different degrees. Girls' enrolment ratios were again very low in the south and the south-east. Table 7 shows stated reasons for non-enrolment of children according to government and UNICEF surveys; 'not necessary' featured as the most common demand side constraint cited. In 2005, a qualitative survey found that even in a northern province with comparatively very positive attitudes towards education (Faryab), teachers and villagers talked about a hard core of very religious families who refused to send children to the state school, among a larger group of families which did not enrol their children for a variety of reasons.[98] Many mullahs had been, in many cases, campaigning for some time against state schools in various parts of the country, including the north, riding a wave of genuine resentment in the communities against poor quality and inflexible curricula.[99]

What the new government in Kabul did not consider is that, contrary to the pre-war period, conservative opposition was going to benefit from a new ability to act collectively through the Taliban movement. A link between the character of state education, the attitude of communities towards it and political developments emerges again from the analysis of rural literacy data, as shown in Table 8 for year 2006. Up to 2006, we can notice the almost perfect match between the penetration of the Taliban and rural illiteracy rates.[100] Attacks on schools and teachers almost always were associated with the initial phases of the insurgency. Already in 2002, extremist groups were campaigning against schools mainly in the south, pinning 'night letters' to the front of schools and homes of staff members. Incidents were reported even in the north, for example in Roi do Ab.[101] At this stage they did not urge families to keep children from school, but protested against international involvement in education.[102] The available (mostly anecdotal) evidence suggests there was opposition in the communities concerning certain aspects of education, in particular the curriculum and the textbooks, allegedly contaminated by the foreigners, and mixed boys and girls classes. The Taliban seem to have built on this resistance, which (however) went far beyond the Taliban themselves to incorporate other community resistance and armed conservative elements. This is suggested (among other things) by the geographical spread of attacks and threats to schools, which went far beyond the area of the insurgency itself (see Table 9 and Map 1). Some teachers seem to have been seen as controversial too, either because of their liberal or progressive views or because of personal disputes with the local communities or the local elders, particularly the mullahs.[103] Intimidation of teachers through 'night letters' and face-to-face direct warnings occurred on a much larger, if difficult to quantify, scale and contributed to the closure of many schools which had not been attacked yet.[104] By December 2008, 670 schools were closed in the areas most affected by the insurgency:

Farah	12
Kandahar	187
Zabul	149
Uruzgan	63
Helmand	215
Paktika	44
Total	**670**

Source: Ministry of Education

[97] Interview with Faryab Provincial Council member, Maimana, March 2009.
[98] Pamela Hunte, *Household Decision-Making and School Enrolment in Afghanistan. Case Study 3: Nesher Villages, Belcheragh District, Faryab Province* (Kabul: AREU 2005), 25; Karlsson and Mansory, *An Afghan Dilemma*, 277 (see FN 23).
[99] Interview with Faryab Provincial Council member, Maimana, March 2009.
[100] See A. Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency 2002–7* (London: Hurst), 4.
[101] Personal communication with Kate Clark, March 2010.
[102] NGO sources.
[103] 'Afghanistan: Education Crisis in the South with 200 Schools Closed', *IRIN* (8 February 2006);
[104] Michael Den Tandt, 'In Afghanistan, to Teach is to Live in Fear', *Globe and Mail* (9 March 2006); Saeed Zabuli, 'Insecurity Halts Learning in Zabul', *Pajhwok Afghan News* (22 December 2006); Sher Ahmad Haidar, 'Threatened and Snubbed: 50,000 Students Banned from School in Ghazni', *Pajhwok Afghan News* (2 January 2007).

The Taliban effort to mobilise this 'reservoir' of conservative resistance to state education would probably have not sufficed to derail a determined effort to push through state education as a nation-building enterprise; hence it could be argued that the half-hearted attitude of the government was the main factor in holding back the spread of education. The hostility to aspects of the state-run educational system by a sector of the population does not seem to have led in general to a wholesale rejection of modern education as such.

One indicator of continuing support for the presence of schools among the communities is the spread of school defence *shuras* and the changing attitude of the Taliban themselves. The MoE launched the school security shuras in 2006 as a way to involve local authorities and elders in protecting the schools. By early 2007, the Ministry of Education was already claiming that shuras existed in half of the country's 9,000 schools. Eventually the programme involved the creation of 8,000 such shuras, according to the MoE; a survey carried out in 2008 found that the population viewed security shuras as the best way to defend schools (34 per cent of respondents), as opposed to 21 per cent who supported negotiations with the opposition (Table 10). It is worth noting that just 0.4 per cent believed foreign troops had a role to play in defending schools, although like all opinion polls in a country at war the reliability might be questionable.

The use of weapons by school security shuras seems to have been very rare. In most cases, the shuras relied on public mobilisation to protect schools and incorporated among their members mullahs, elders and police. In some cases, villagers hired armed guards, while in others, community self-defence groups were tasked to protect the schools, but there is no record of armed engagements between these school security forces and the insurgents.[105] Claims by the Ministry of Education that the shuras were reducing attacks on schools during late 2006 and early 2007 are difficult to verify, but statistics show a continuing increase in the overall number of attacks. According to UNICEF, there were 236 violent incidents in schools in 2007, including 'armed attacks, arson, and explosions. In 2008, 290 such incidents resulted in 92 deaths and 170 injuries.' In the first half of 2009, 'UNICEF recorded 171 incidents, in which 60 students and teachers were killed and 204 wounded'.[106] Whatever success the shuras achieved in defending the schools, it seems to have been due to negotiations and compromise with the opposition more than to improved defence. Already in 2006 administrative and security officials in the south were pointing out how 're-opening of schools without local cooperation was impossible', although village elders were sometimes sceptical of the willingness of either government or Taliban to allow them to play a role.[107] Such negotiations in fact even led to the reopening of a significant portion of schools which had been closed (220 by October 2009 out of about 800 closed up that point).[108] With Farouq Wardak as minister and under pressure because of the wave of violence unleashed against schools, the MoE started allowing greater flexibility with the curricula at the local level, avoiding to raise issues if certain parts of the textbooks were ignored or pages were even torn off the books.[109]

A change in the attitude of the Taliban towards education in 2008, perhaps decided by the central leadership, seems to have allowed negotiations over the re-opening of schools to gain momentum. In areas like Wardak and Logar, where educational levels have long been higher and resistance to state education weaker, several commanders of the Taliban and of other insurgent groups appear not to have been targeting schools, even if some of their colleagues were doing it.[110] Although the Taliban might have been under some kind of pressure from the communities to leave the schools open or re-open them if they were closed, they clearly were not ready to entirely renounce their stand on the corruption of schools by foreign influence and their use as centres for the spread of Christianity.[111] In practice, agreements to reopen schools involved purging teachers who were not acceptable to Taliban and local conservative elements and hiring conservative mullahs with

[105] Interview with head of education department of Herat province, October 2009; interview with Ataullah Wahidyar, chief of staff, MoE, Kabul, October 2009; Laura King, 'Afghans Try to Stop Attacks on Their Schools', *Los Angeles Times* (11 February 2007).

[106] Ajmal Samadi, 'Education Policy Today Will Determine What Afghanistan Is in 2020', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (31 August 2009).

[107] Zabuli, 'Insecurity Halts Learning' (see FN 104).

[108] Interview with Ataullah Wahidyar, chief of staff, MoE, Kabul October 2009; 'Hundreds of Schools Reopen in Afghanistan', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (1 May 2009); Abaceen Nasimi, 'Helmand Parents Face Unenviable Dilemma', *Afghan Recovery Report* (18 March 2009); Haidar, 'Threatened and Snubbed' (see FN 104).

[109] Interview with Ataullah Wahidyar, chief of staff, MoE, Kabul, October 2009.

[110] Personal communication with Asia Foundation staff member, April 2009.

[111] On this see Zabuli, 'Insecurity Halts Learning' (see FN 104); Human Rights Watch, *Lessons in Terror: Attacks on Education in Afghanistan* (July 2006), 34.

some leaning towards the Taliban to exercise some kind of supervision on behalf of the Taliban, affecting in particular the curricula.[112] Such an approach might defuse a number of tense situations at the local level and make education of some sort accessible again to a number of communities. However, from a perspective of nation-building, it obviously entails the danger of teaching children in the south something substantially different from what children elsewhere are taught.

4.4 Flaws on the delivery side

The uncertain attitude towards the conservative challenge was not the only problem of the government's strategy. Indeed even if one cannot speak of an outright rejection of state education, certainly within a few years of the fall of the Taliban Emirate, the declining enthusiasm among the population for state-provided education was palpable. In a sense, the balance of strength between secular and religious education in Afghanistan was affected by perceptions more than anything else. Villagers were mostly not in a position to accurately assess what state-provided education was offering their children, except when the quality of the service was unmistakably poor. Expectations were often utterly unrealistic in 2002–3, with village parents and children often expressing the hope that they would have access to higher education and start a professional career.[113] Disappointment with the quality of the education provided by the state was soon evident. Professional teachers were more hostile than ever to deploying to the villages. As a result, whole districts did not have a single qualified teacher.[114] By 2008 or 2009, the pendulum seemed to have started swinging back towards the madrasas. The fact that some madrasas were modernising the curriculum and offering more attractive conditions and more committed teachers (even within Afghanistan) contributed to rising attendance.[115] Many madrasas had suffered from neglect in the early post-Taliban years,[116] but after 2006, they started attracting funding again from both private sources and the state, following Minister of Education Hanif Atmar's decision to develop a stronger state-controlled madrasa sector.[117]

One way to measure the declining enthusiasm for state education is the declining enrolment figures starting from about 2005, whereas the burgeoning demographic growth and the expansion in the number of schools should have guaranteed constantly increasing numbers of pupils. Table 1 shows a drop in absolute numbers in 2005, but in successive years the enrolment rate either stagnated or declined. However, the number of pupils attending school was always significantly lower than enrolment figures suggest.

4.4.1 Quality and cost

Surveys showed criticism of the quality of the teachers, the lack of facilities and equipment and the absenteeism of teachers and principals, who almost universally had to moonlight in order to be able to support themselves and their families, given the paltry salaries they were paid with obvious negative repercussions on the quality of teaching.[118] The practice might have existed before the war as well, but does not appear to have been as extensive. Table 11 shows the most common complaints among parents, according to a 2003 survey. Anecdotal evidence provided in meetings with teachers supports these findings.[119] Teaching often lasted eight months only; teachers often were not punctual or left early or were even completely absent. They were often observed leaving 'the responsibilities of classroom activities to an older student, while [sitting] outside drinking tea'.[120] Parents were reported to often complain about the prevalence of corporal punishments at school, sometimes apparently because of 'assumed differing political or ethnic backgrounds', despite the fact that it was formally banned.[121]

[112] Interview with Ataullah Wahidyar, chief of staff, MoE, Kabul, 6 October 2009.
[113] Hunte, *Case Study 1*, 16 (see FN 80); Karlsson and Mansory, *An Afghan Dilemma*, 270 (see FN 23).
[114] Interview with member of the parlaimentary commission on religious affairs and education; interview with head of education department of Faryab, Maimana, March 2009; interview with member of parliament from Parwan, Kabul, March 2009.
[115] Karlsson and Mansory, *Islamic and Modern Education* (see FN 22); Karlsson and Mansory, *An Afghan Dilemma*, 161, 316 (see FN 23); interviews with madrasa teachers, Herat 2009.
[116] Misbahullah Abdulbaqi, 'Madrassah in Afghanistan: Evolution and its Future', *Policy Perspectives* (Special Issue Afghanistan 2008).
[117] Personal communication with Mawlawi Khalifa, Nawin village of Enjil district, October 2009.
[118] Interviews with teachers around Afghanisan, 2008–9.
[119] Pamela Hunte, *Household Decision-Making and School Enrolment in Afghanistan. Case Study 2: District 13 Pul-i-Khushk, Kabul City* (Kabul: AREU 2005), 14.
[120] Karlsson and Mansory, *An Afghan Dilemma*, 196, 308–9 (see FN 23); Spink, *Teacher Education*, 30–1 (see FN 44); Human Rights Watch, *Lessons in Terror*, 92 (see FN 111).
[121] Sadeq Behnam and Sudabah Afzali, 'Hard Lessons In Herat Schools', *Afghan Recovery Report* 223 (20 July 2006); Spink, 'Education and Politics', 195–207, 203 (see FN 70).

Another factor contributing to the dampening of the original enthusiasm for state education was that, contrary to the stated commitment of the Afghan Constitution, education was often far from free. According to an Oxfam Survey, 'informal user fees and costs to households . . . can often deter families from sending children to school.' Oxfam's primary research showed that across Daikundi province, 85 per cent of schools charged end-user fees, although it is not clear how many of these were state schools.[122] Moreover, delays and failures in distributing books forced many parents to buy them on the market.[123] The average cost of sending a child to school in Kabul province in 2004 has been estimated as follows:

> first grade: 350 Afs (7 USD) or 4 per cent of per capita GDP;
> fifth grade: 1,000 Afs or 12 per cent of per capita GDP;
> ninth grade: 1,770 Afs or 20 per cent of per capita GDP.[124]

4.4.2 Corruption

The spread of corruption to the point of offsetting any post-2001 gain in re-establishing some functionality to the Afghan state contributed to compound the crisis of the educational sector. The practice of forging educational documents and degrees was frequent even in a province like Nangarhar, which traditionally had a high level of school attendance and a comparatively positive attitude towards state education. The principal of a local secondary school estimated that half of all the teachers working in the province might have used forged documents to get their jobs; students too were buying admission to higher grades to speed up and smooth their education. Fake documents were reportedly on sale in Nangarhar and neighbouring Peshawar for no more than $50, although paying bribes to administration officials was also necessary to get the fake documents accepted; many principals were also allegedly involved in the corruption, verifying faked documents for genuine. As a result, illiterate students could be found studying in secondary schools (seventh or eighth grades).[125] The MoE itself was clearly affected by the corruption.

Although forgery of documents became more difficult once a central record of diplomas and degrees was re-established at the MoE, in 2006 about 1,000 forged documents were discovered at the MoE by anti-corruption officials.[126] The expectation that access to higher education or to a job would come as a favour and as a result of lobbying through the system was widespread, particularly in the south, with an obvious negative impact on school efforts.[127]

4.4.3 Weak nation-building

The rather dismal picture presented here suggests that even after 2001, the Afghan government has had a weak record in putting together a focused effort from the MoE to use the educational system as a tool of nation-building. A quick look at the textbooks of the period reveals this. The ambition of the MoE to have textbooks developed by Afghans for Afghans and promoting a 'moderate' vision of Islam were frustrated by a lack of adequate human resources and by the poor management of the available ones.[128] Complaints about the unchanging content of the textbooks also surfaced, as the history of Afghanistan was still being described as the history of the Mohammadzais.[129] A clear ideological or political message was now missing however; the Mohammadzais' dynastic history was accompanied by praise for commander Massud and by the casting Mullah Omar in a negative light.

With schools still being one of the few manifestations of the presence of the Afghan state in the villages (if not the only one), aspects of the delivery of education not directly linked to nation-building end up acquiring a significance in that sense too. Examples include the failure to deal with the poor discipline and attendance of teachers and the failure to quickly distribute the new (2003) curriculum framework to the schools; by 2005, very few schools had seen it yet.[130] Even the textbooks were the object of deficient attention in the MoE: they contained many errors, despite substantial amounts of money spent on editing them, and were usually printed on poor paper and badly glued together, as a result of the failure of both the MoE and donors to inspect the output of the printers; allegations of corruption

[122] Oxfam International, *Free, Quality Education for Every Afghan Child*, 2006.
[123] Heidi Vogt, 'Millions for Textbooks Bogged Down in Afghanistan', *Associated Press* (22 April 2009).
[124] The Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium, *Report Card: Progress on Compulsory Education (Grades 1–9)* (Afghanistan, March 2004).
[125] Izzatullah Zawab and Abdul Hadi Dariz, 'Education in Nangarhar – Future at Stake', *Pajhwok Afghan News* (19 July 2008).
[126] Interview with member of parliament from Baghlan, 1 April 2009; *Kabul Times* (12 March 2006).
[127] Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, *Research Study* (see FN 83).
[128] Spink, 'Education and Politics', 201–2 (see FN 70).
[129] Interview with Uzbeks intellectual, Mazar, October 2008.
[130] Georgescu, 'Primary and Secondary Curriculum Development', 439 (see FN 89).

flourished.[131] The image of the (internationally supported) Afghan state conveyed to the villagers by these failures must have contributed to cool down the initial enthusiasm of the villagers for state education.

Positive achievements, such as the recognition of minority languages, were spoiled by the prevalence of patronage and incompetence. When, from 2004, the Uzbek language gained official recognition, the actual launch of education in Uzbek was delayed because, despite the establishment of Uzbek courses in the Faryab teacher-training institute, textbooks did not exist yet as of spring 2009. Even primary school textbooks were developed only slowly, allegedly because of the questionable recruitment practices at the centre.[132] Reportedly, Minister of Education Atmar gave some impulse to the programme, but his successor Faruq Wardak was reportedly less keen.[133]

4.4.4 Demoralised teachers

More important than these small glitches in the production and distribution of teaching material was the failure to mobilise the human resources necessary to bring the message of nation-building to the population. Although exact figures are hard to come by, it was obvious in the years after 2001 that most trained teachers in the country failed to go back to teaching; indeed even an estimated 70 per cent of newly trained teachers went for jobs outside education. While there might have been several reasons, the main one was clearly the low salaries. In 2002, the salary of a teacher was fixed at US$41 as a result of the financial constraints deriving from the massive hiring plans. That was acknowledged as being far too low and from the beginning the MoE had plans to double it to US$80. Government officials were reported to describe teachers' salaries as a 'make or break' issue for the country.[134] However, by 2006–7 the average salary paid to teachers still had not reached the planned level and stood at US$74 after a recent pay rise and including a food allowance, despite strong inflationary trends which meant that even US$80 would not represent a decent living salary to a teacher anymore. In 2009, the salary was brought up to US$100, still not enough to catch up with inflation. The fact that the modest salaries were often paid months late contributed to the demoralisation of the teachers.[135]

The delays in raising salaries were largely due to the MoE's failure to assess the teachers' qualifications and therefore obtain from donors the funds needed to offer higher salaries to a selected number of them. Teachers in general resisted being assessed and the MoE did not try too hard. This failure was likely due to the need to protect the patronage networks created after 2001 within the MoE (see below). In the absence of any assessment, it became also impossible to set up an effective programme of in-service training for teachers. Efforts funded by USAID to do in-service training started only in 2007 and have not proceeded very far yet; only 11 provinces have been affected up to this point and without too much impact. One analyst working for an international organisation commented that USAID officials planning the programme lacked awareness of the huge variations in the quality of the teachers and they proceeded to implement a standard template, as if they had been dealing with a much more developed country. The MoE contributed to bringing the programme to a standstill because of its reluctance to admit that 10–20 per cent were 'very poorly' qualified. The politically hard decision of determining which teachers were actually trainable cost a lot in terms of missed chances to improve the skills of the teachers.[136]

Only in June 2009, the government announced plans to raise the salary of qualified teachers to US$400;[137] it is not clear whether it has the means for paying the higher salaries. The salary of teachers per se were not the only problem, as external intervention and the large-scale reconstruction efforts had impacted greatly on the salary scales in Afghanistan, given the shortage of educated people. After 2001, it was common for interpreters or even drivers working for NGOs or international organisation to earn twice as much as a teacher or more. Even the agricultural sector was sometimes more attractive than teaching, as had been the case before 1978 when absenteeism

[131] Heidi Vogt, 'Millions for Textbooks' (see FN 123); Marjorie Kehe, 'Why Textbooks We Paid for Never Reached Afghan Schools', *Christian Science Monitor* (24 April 2009).
[132] Interview with Provincial Council member from Maimana city, March 09; interview with head of education department of Faryab, Maimana, March 2009.
[133] Interview with member of parliament from Faryab, 12 March 2009.
[134] Asian Development Bank, *A New Start,* 8 (see FN 74).
[135] Abdul Samad Roohani, 'Non-payment of Salaries: Teachers Boycott Classes', *Pajhwok Afghan News* (5 March 2006).
[136] Interview carried out in Kabul, October 2009.
[137] Shakeela Abrahimkhil, 'Salary Increase for Afghan Teachers: Govt. Vows', *Pajhwok Afghan News* (11 June 2009); Shir Muhammad Jahish, 'Schools Deserted as Teachers Opt for Farming', *Pajhwok Afghan News* (28 September 2006); interviews with teachers in several Afghan provinces, 2008–2009.

from work among teachers in specific regions peaked during the harvesting season.[138] As a result, many teachers were drawn towards other jobs.

Maintaining a 'clean' payroll also appears to have been too much of a challenge: in 2006, a source noted that 'between 16,000 to 20,000 teachers are estimated to be ghost employees', including 'teachers who do not turn up to work, who only collect their salaries, and/or teachers who collect more than one salary as they are registered more than once'. The cost of ghost teachers was estimated at $12 million per month.[139]

The low quality of the teachers came to be recognised as a major problem relatively early. Under pressure from its foreign advisers and donors, the MoE agreed to indirectly assess the capacity and skills of the teachers by asking them to fill administrative forms which were designed to function as tests as well. The results were not publicised, but according to an adviser, a 'significant number' of teachers turned out to be illiterate.[140] More partial testing done by NGOs confirmed such findings. A test administered in Mazar-i Sharif in 2008 by an NGO and consisting of a primary school exam found that almost three quarters of the teachers taking the test failed to pass it.[141] The Agha Khan Foundation found in a test in the north-east of the country that 10 per cent of the teachers had never been to school, while many others had only been to madrasas.[142] In Kandahar in 2004, 'more than 65 percent of teachers have not completed 12th grade' (the minimum requirement).[143]

The Ministry of Education's focus on the easier measurables (number of schools, quantity of equipment distributed, number of teachers hired) and its reluctance to measure the quality of service delivered suggest that the effort was mainly to please the external donors by showing off positive statistics, rather than to strengthen the Afghan state or even the elite in power. The school-building effort might have looked impressive, but many of the schools being built only had two or three rooms and no rooms for the administration or the principal; however, in the statistics, they still counted as schools built.[144] Donors themselves often contributed to assembling an acceptable façade of success in order to respond to the political priorities of the moment.[145]

4.4.5 Weak supervision

At the same time and in contrast to most previous governments, the MoE also failed to coherently use the educational structure as a source of pro-government indoctrination, or even as a window to advertise the virtues of the new regime in Kabul. Until the early 1990s, Afghan teachers might not have been very advanced in their education techniques and skills, but they were at least disciplined and sometimes committed; there is little indication that this was still the case after 2001. Very little attention was paid to establishing an effective corps of ministerial inspectors, who would regularly visit schools and would be sufficiently prepared professionally to assess the performance of the teachers. Supervision from the MoE also remained weak:

> Supervision visits are rare particularly in rural areas where there is a lack of transport and schools are scattered over large geographical areas. Supervisors are primarily inspectors who do little to improve the methodology and teaching practices of the teachers. Moreover, there is no systematic reporting and feedback on findings and recommendations from the supervisory staff back to the Central level.[146]
>
> Provincial education office teams that come to 'inspect' schools, only checked attendance records of teachers and students, ensured financial resources were properly allocated and that supplies received by the school were present.[147]

The task of making sure that the teachers were dong their job increasingly fell on the shoulders of newly established parents' councils, which however could only be brought to life by proactive and committed principals. The new councils had a supervisory role and could be used by principals to gather information about what was going on inside the classrooms. In the absence of the latter, the

[138] Jahish, 'Schools Deserted' (see FN 137).
[139] A. Faiz, Director of General Education, Ministry of Education, quoted in Oxfam, *Free, Quality Education* (see FN 122).
[140] Personal communication with foreign adviser to MoE, Kabul, April 2009.
[141] Personal communication with NGO worker, Kabul, October 2008.
[142] Spink, 'Education and Politics', 203 (see FN 70).
[143] Anne Evans, 'A Guide to Government in Afghanistan' (AREU/ World Bank 2004), 125.
[144] Interview with member of the Provincial Council of Faryab, Maimana, March 2009.
[145] See Joe Stephens and David B. Ottaway, 'Afghanistan: A Rebuilding Plan Full of Cracks', *The Washington Post* (20 November 2005).
[146] Ministry of Education, *National Education Strategic Plan for Afghanistan 1385–1389* (Kabul, 1385).
[147] Spink, *Teacher Education*, 30 (see FN 44).

functioning of the schools was hardly subject to any real monitoring.[148] Indeed, the MoE was often unable to address the injustices and the cases of favouritism and nepotism that it could spot; heads of education more inclined to protect the patronage networks of which they were part ignored several MoE requests to promote qualified people .[149] The few schools which were functioning well were the result of the personal commitment of individual principals. In practice, only when principals were able and ready to spend their own money on their schools could they reach good standards of education, as the MoE was completely unable to cope because of weak management. Even when equipment was delivered to the schools, maintenance and spares (such as printers' ink) would not be provided.[150]

4.4.6 Patronage

Rather than as a key tool of nation-building, post-2001 politicians seem to have mainly viewed the MoE as a huge reservoir of patronage. Its status as the ministry with the largest payroll in the country contributed to stimulate the appetite of politicians:

Number of MoE employees

Year	employees
1381 (2002/03)	92,209
1383 (2004/05)	157,621
1386 (2007/08)	191,603
1389 (2010/11) (planned)	231,603

Source: Central Statistics Office

In the presidential elections of 2004, one of the candidates tried to use the teachers to campaign on his behalf, with some success given that he had recruited many of them, particularly the people running the school administrations, during his tenure as minister.[151] The former mujahidin brought in by him developed into a lobby, often boycotting heads of education in the provinces that were not to their taste. Although the plans to quickly expand the ministry implied the hiring of many under-qualified teachers, even headmasters often only had primary education, a fact that made them dependent on political patronage to maintain their positions, but certainly did not contribute to the effective delivery of education.[152] In 2003, the minister of education had actively if unsuccessfully lobbied to have his picture printed in each textbook, despite the fact that this would have delayed their printing and distribution.[153] At the provincial level too, local factions and groups often prized the education departments as a source of patronage. A source, for example, alleged that a particular faction captured the education department of Samangan province, and then proceeded to concentrate the limited scope for patronage and favours to a particular district, leaving the others completely neglected.[154]

4.4.7 Political demobilisation of teachers

The failure to (or lack of interest in) mobilise human resources within the MoE was compounded by the political demobilisation of the teachers. Paradoxically, the large scale participation of teachers in the political struggles of the 1970s-1990s laid the ground for their political demobilisation in the twenty-first century. Activist teachers were drawn into government, armed forces and political parties, emptying the schools of the more ideological component of the teacher corps. While from a certain perspective, the political indifference of teachers might be welcomed, when compared to their involvement with extremist groups in the 1960s and 1970s, it was also the reflection of the demoralisation and loss of a sense of direction of a key category of civil servants, as their social status was in freefall. Comments by teachers and others involved in managing primary education suggest high levels of frustration. One SCA employee managing the NGO's educational programme commented that teachers started to be seen as 'people who cheat in order to get a salary'.[155] In the words on one employee of the MoE:

> The government tells all the people that the doors to the schools are always open, but they don't know anything about education and the problems we face in the schools these days….In every class-room 80 students are sitting beside each other like sheep….The population of this

[148] Personal communication with school principals in Herat, October 2009.
[149] Interview with former teacher from Kunduz, March 2009.
[150] Heidi Vogt, 'Millions for Textbooks' (see FN 123); interviews with school principals in Herat city, October 2009.
[151] See for example Sayed Yaqub Ibrahimi, 'Qanuni's Northern Tour Draws Criticism', *Afghan Recovery Report* 139 (7 October 2004).
[152] Interview with head of education dept of Faryab, Maimana, March 2009; interview with member of parliament from Kunduz, March 2009.
[153] Spink, 'Education and Politics', 202 (see FN 70).
[154] Interview with former teacher from Samangan, Kabul, October 2009.
[155] Interview with Amir Mansory, SCA, Kabul October 2009.

> district is about two million [*sic*] and there aren't enough schools. The authorities don't care about us – it seems they don't think we're from Afghanistan at all![156]

The demobilisation of the teachers also deprived the *project* of an Afghan nation of a group of cadres which through their political mobilisation demonstrated at least a degree of commitment to nation-building in Afghanistan. Teachers were no different after 2001 than other government employees. By 2004, demoralisation had gone so far that the main motivation for applying for the popular in-service training courses seemed to be 'meet other teachers, to receive a per diem and to enjoy the lunch'.[157]

5. CONCLUSION

The multiple dimensions of the educational controversy in Afghanistan played out in complex ways. It would be misleading to see the 'opposite' sides, communities and state, religious education and secular education, as entrenched in a static contraposition. The nation-building efforts of the Afghan state were often inconsistent, half-hearted and misled, but they did have an impact. By the early twenty-first century, for example, it was clear that many communities were adopting a vision of education that was closer to that of the state, that is, they were showing greater interest in secular education. This seemed to be a stronger trend in villages previously more exposed to state education. Despite the weaknesses of the state effort as described above and the disastrous backlash which started in 1978, state action had forever changed the status quo in many villages. Even the Taliban, who in the 1990s rode on popular opposition to state education as understood by the leftists, were trying to introduce a new model of religious education, which incorporated secular subjects: the old model of an education exclusively based on religious subjects was no longer defensible.

The state, on the other hand, was more prepared to concede ground after 2001. The lack of a strong agenda of state manipulation, whether for the purpose of nation-building or for any other purpose, undoubtedly allowed the communities to sometime renegotiate the curricula even if for the wrong reasons (see the section *Persistent opposition,* above). The example of the Uzbeks is also significant: Afghan Uzbeks saw the introduction of Uzbek language courses, although hampered by an erratic effort, as a major achievement. In the south, the state has been *de facto* negotiating with the Taliban for the re-opening of schools, making significant concessions.

The presence of the state in the villages through schools and teachers was a key aspect of the nation-building dimension of education. In reality, the investment has always been rather limited, particularly in terms of despatching professional teachers. This weakness is still present today, perhaps even more pronounced than in the 1970s. The 'demobilisation' of the 'army of teachers' is reflected in their depoliticisation: from being a key recruiting ground for radical groups in the 1970s, teachers today are rarely involved in politics. The role of girls' education and the content of the curricula remain also controversial today, even if in reality the central government is not trying very hard to use education for political indoctrination any more.

Whether the nation-building agenda should be pursued is a matter for the Afghan government to decide. The two main alternatives include a more decentralised approach, leaving greater room to communities to choose the type of education they want, and a continuation of the centralised system adopted since the beginning. It is not clear what cultivating the educational desires and ambitions of local communities would lead to, in terms of the future of the Afghan state. However, it is clear that if nation-building through education is to remain on the agenda, then a more coherent and determined effort is necessary to make it successful. It is not clear in the current political predicament who can lead such an effort and motivate the 'army of teachers' to take up their tasks with greater commitment. In the absence of strong political leadership and some mobilisation of the teachers, the chances of nation-building through education seem dim. The present mix of half-pursued agendas seems to offer the worst possible world: it is enough to create opposition, but insufficient to achieve positive results and mobilise that section of the population that still sees state education as an asset. Afghanistan needs a more resolute choice between two alternatives: either developing a more flexible educational system, which adapts to the demands of the communities and abandons the top-down approach, or having a renewed, strengthened push for centrally managed state education, with a better selection of staff and a more capable administration in Kabul. A choice between the two would, of course, be highly political, and would have to be based not only on realistic expectations of what the Afghan state can achieve but also on a concept of Afghanistan's future: Will it be a nation

[156] Hunte, *Case Study 2*, 14 (see FN 119).
[157] Spink, *Teacher Education,* 31 (see FN 44).

or a mere collection of communities without substantial bonds to each other? The flexible, community friendly approach would soften opposition, but at the price of weakening 'nation-building' as each community would receive a different education and would be taught about different sets of 'heroes': Massud in the north-east, maybe Mullah Omar in the south, and other heroes and villains varying from region to region or even within? In order to succeed,the top-down approach, with its unified set of values, national heroes and interpretation of Afghan history, 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 considerations the top-down approach. It is clear that the existing pessimism abut the capability of the Afghan state to improve its effectiveness is making the top-down approach increasingly unpalatable both in Afghanistan and abroad.

ANNEXES

Table 1.
Primary school enrolment

	male	female	total	enrolment ratio* (%)
1929			45,091	
1940			57,000	
1950	87,444	3,970	91,414	
1960	155,719	8,900	164,619	9.0
1970	303,739	54,298	358,037	21.0
1980	917,413	198,560	1,115,973	36.0
1990	410,846	211,667	622,513	
1999	811,495	64,110	875,605	29.0
2002	1,862,555	805,074	2,667,629	
2003	2,466,547	1,314,468	3,781,015	
2004	3,139,801	1,290,341	4,430,142	
2005	2,777,564	1,541,255	4,318,819	
2006	2,930,784	1,738,326	4,669,110	
2007	2,977,350	1,740,727	4,718,077	60.5

* enrolled children as a percentage of school-age boys and girls
Source: Directorate of Statistics, Ministry of Education, various years

Table 2.
Qualifications of teachers

	1952 (%)	1968 (%)
below grade 9	30.0	16.5
grades 9–12	60.0	66.1
lycee grade 12	—	11.0
Islamic and vocational schools	10.0	6.4
TOTAL	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Planning Department, Ministry of Education, *Education in Afghanistan During the Last Fifty Years* (Kabul, 1968), 145; UNESCO, *Report of the Mission to Afghanistan* (Paris, 1952), 19.

Table 3.
Changes in weekly timetables through the different governments, 1960–2003, grades 1 to 3

subject	Monarchy and republic (1960–1978)	Pro-Soviet period (1978–1992)	NGOs, Rabbani (1992–1994/6)	Taliban govern-ment (1994/6–2001)	Post-2001 (2002–2003)
Holy Koran	8.3	4.2	20.0	26.1	4.5
religion	8.3	0.0	20.0	21.7	9.1
sport	4.2	8.3	3.3	0.0	4.5
manual work	0.0	8.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
calligraphy	16.7	0.0	3.3	0.0	13.6
drawing, art	12.5	4.2	3.3	0.0	0.0
maths, science, language, etc.	50.0	75.0	50.0	52.2	68.2
TOTAL	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
TOTAL religion-related	16.7	4.2	40.0	47.8	13.6

Table 3.
(*continued*), grades 4 to 6

subject	Monarchy and republic (1960–1978)	Pro-Soviet period (1978–1992)	NGOs, Rabbani (1992–1994/6)	Taliban govern-ment (1994/6–2001)	Post-2001 (2002–2003)
Holy Koran	6.7	4.0	18.8	16.7	7.1
religion	10.0	4.0	12.5	36.7	7.1
sport	3.3	8.0	3.1	0.0	3.6
manual work	0.0	8.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
calligraphy	6.7	0.0	3.1	0.0	7.1
drawing, art	6.7	4.0	3.1	0.0	0.0
maths, science, language, etc.	66.7	72.0	59.4	46.7	75.0
TOTAL	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
TOTAL religion-related	16.7	8.0	31.3	53.3	14.3

Note: Figures given are percentage of the total weekly timetable.
Source: Pia Karlsson and Amir Mansory, *Islamic and Modern Education in Afghanistan – Conflictual or Complementary?* (Institute of International Education, Stockholm University).

Table 4.
Enrolment ratios in 1978

		enrolment ratios by province, grades 1–4			
		boys (%)	girls (%)	urban (%)	rural(%)
Central region	Kabul	100	50	93	42
	Parwan	77	15	108	43
	Wardak	60	0.04	195	29
	Logar	79	13	110	44
	Bamiyan	65	7	41	36
South-eastern region	Ghazni	63	6	85	31
	Paktia	69	2	291	30
Eastern region	Nangarhar	60	8	87	30
	Laghman	59	10	50	32
	Konarha	72	12	21	44
North-eastern region	Badakhshan	76	13	174	40
	Takhar	51	6	159	21
	Baghlan	65	11	77	31
	Konduz	58	9	69	26
Northern region	Samangan	52	9	90	22
	Balkh	53	13	172	23
	Jowzjan	58	8	75	27
	Faryab	73	23	107	39
Western region	Badghis	57	4	51	28
	Heart	68	17	76	33
	Farah	65	8	71	33
	Nimruz	87	16	205	42
	Ghor	60	4	237	30
Southern region	Helmand	41	4	146	23
	Kandahar	49	8	36	18
	Zabul	49	2	101	23
	Uruzgan	51	0.8	76	24

Note: Figures are estimated percentages of the children of school age in that category enrolled in schools. Percentages may exceed 100 due to the practice of repeated enrollment after drop-out, which tends to be particularly high in rural areas.
Source: Directorate of Statistics, Ministry of Education

Table 5.
Boy and girl enrolment ratios in Pashto and Dari schools, by type of school

		Pashto		Dari	
		boys (%)	girls (%)	boys (%)	girls (%)
1964	village schools	93.3	6.7	85.0	15.0
	primary schools	96.1	3.9	85.9	14.1
	middle schools	96.7	3.3	75.6	24.4
	lycees	93.9	6.1	72.8	27.2
1969	village schools	93.7	6.3	87.4	12.6
	primary schools	95.7	4.3	79.8	20.2
	middle schools	98.2	1.8	77.5	22.5
	lycees	96.6	3.4	76.1	23.9

Source: Directorate of Statistics, Ministry of Education, 1965 and 1970

Table 6.
Net enrolment for boys and girls aged 7–13 in 2003

	boys (%)	girls (%)		boys (%)	girls (%)
Kabul city	92	81	Nangarhar total	68	39
Mazar city	86	85	Takhar	65	39
Kabul urban and rural	86	67	Kandahar city	65	35
Herat city	84	88	Nangarhar rural	64	31
Parwan	84	29	Paktika	64	6
Kapisa	82	47	Khost	63	14
Balkh rural and urban	82	60	Sar-I Pul	63	25
Baghlan	82	58	Faryab	62	41
Balkh rural	81	54	Ghor	61	20
Jalalabad city	79	63	Bamyan	59	30
Herat urban and rural	79	67	Kunduz rural and urban	57	36
Kunduz city	78	64	Zabul	55	1
Kunar	78	47	Kandahar total	55	19
Herat rural	76	55	Farah	53	19
Badakhshan	75	69	Ghazni	53	28
Wardak	75	25	Kandahar rural	49	8
Paktiya	74	16	Kunduz rural	47	25
Logar	72	24	Nimruz	43	34
Laghman	71	54	Nooristan	40	30
Samangan	68	43	Badghis	36	1
Kabul rural	68	32	Helmand	26	11
Jowzjan	68	25	Uruzgan	25	10

Note: Figures given as a percentage of the total estimated number of school children in that age group.
Source: UNICEF surveys, 2003

Table 7.
Reasons given by parents for non-enrolment of their children, in a 2003 survey

	reasons	cities (%)	cities and towns (%)	rural (%)
supply side constraints	school is too far	20.4	25.5	39.5
	inadequate facility	0.3	9.6	29.0
	no separate school for girls	1.2	13.6	23.6
	teacher's gender	0.3	1.8	7.3
	inadequate sanitation	2.4	1.9	0.9
demand side constraints	domestic work	18.4	18.7	16.9
	not necessary	27.3	20.1	14.1
	household income	13.1	10.1	6.6
	expensive	12.0	7.8	4.7
	feel ashamed	5.3	4.2	4.5
	other	22.7	19.9	21.3

Notes: Percentages refer to the number of parents giving that answer.
'Cities' includes Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Mazar-i Sharif and Jalalabad.
'Cities and towns' includes the previously cited cities and all other urban centres.
Source: UNICEF and Afghan government surveys

Table 8.
Rural literacy rates by gender in Afghanistan's provinces, circa 2006

province	female (%)	male (%)	province	female (%)	male (%)
Parwan	18.0	48.8	Nuristan	16.5	27.8
Kapisa	19.9	46.3	Nangarhar	7.9	32.2
Paktya	22.3	40.4	Farah	13.9	26.5
Panjshir	19.2	43.3	Nimruz	10.5	29.1
Balkh	19.7	41.9	Jawzjan	9.4	29.9
Kabul	17.9	42.5	Baghlan	8.6	23.8
Ghazni	18.3	42.4	Ghor	7.5	24.5
heart	22.0	37.0	Samangan	8.0	22.3
Kunduz	17.3	34.4	Takhar	7.8	16.5
Kunarha	15.0	37.2	Laghman	4.0	19.3
Badakhshan	17.8	31.5	Kandahar	2.6	19.2
Khost	6.2	40.0	Sar-i-Pul	4.5	15.2
Logar	10.6	35.7	Badghis	6.1	12.8
Wardak	9.8	35.9	Uruzgan	0.3	8.6
Bamyan	9.3	33.5	Hilmand	0.6	6.8
Daikundi	14.7	29.7	Paktika	0.4	3.4
Faryab	17.1	26.6	Zabul	0.1	0.5

Source: Statistics of the Ministry of Rural Reconstruction and Development, undated paper

Table 9.
Opinions among Afghan population concerning the responsibility of attacks on schools

external threats to schools	Taliban (%)	criminal groups (%)	don't know (%)	other (%)
National	36	33	31	0
Heart	20	26	53	1
Balkh	20	20	60	0
Ghazni	96	2	2	0
Kapisa	42	50	8	0
Khost	1	97	2	0
Kunar	49	37	13	1
Logar	8	7	86	0
Wardak	31	12	57	0

Note: percentages of the total survey
Source: Survey in Knowledge on Fire: Attacks on Education in Afghanistan (Care International, January 2009). Sample of 1,037 interviewees in 36 districts of eight provinces.

Table 10.
Opinions among Afghan population concerning the best way to defend local schools

	(%)
security shura	34.0
disarmament	27.0
negotiate	21.0
increased police	17.0
international forces	0.4

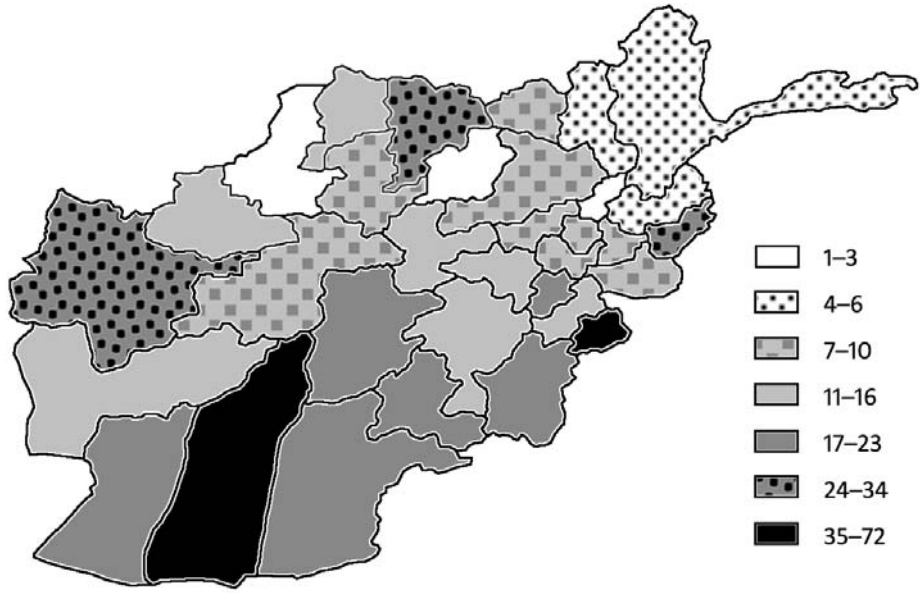
Note: percentage of the surveyed Afghans
Source: Knowledge on Fire: Attacks on Education in Afghanistan (Care International, January 2009). Same sample as in Table 9.

Table 11.
Problems at school indicated by surveyed parents

	(%)
lack of textbooks and supplies	38
facilities in bad condition	25
lack of teachers	15
poor teaching	11
no problem	6
other problems	5

Source: NRVA survey 2003, covering '5,559 wealth groups'

Map 1.
Attacks on schools and education, January 2006-May 2008



Source: Adapted from *Knowledge on Fire: Attacks on Education in Afghanistan* (Care International, January 2009).

Map 2.
Provinces of Afghanistan, 2002

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