Improving Teacher Motivation and Performance in the Teaching Force of Afghanistan

This paper addresses the different UNESCO goals for ways to develop professional teachers within a nation – in this case, in Afghanistan where efforts to improve the competence and skills of teachers is a high priority. Since the re-building of the destroyed education infrastructure began in 2002, with international support, Afghanistan has taken major strides in re-creating its education system by building new schools and classrooms, enrolling more students than ever before in its history, revising curricula and producing new textbooks in every area, recruiting and training thousands of new teachers, and establishing teacher training colleges in every province.

The following five UNESCO goals are the key-points in the discussion of improving the capacity of teachers:

1. Attracting the best into the teaching profession
2. Enhancing the status of teachers
3. Professional development and collaborative learning
4. Enabling environment for teachers

5. School leadership and teacher management

In addition to the five sub-topics listed in this section, we add two more that are essential for Afghanistan:

6. Upgrading the skills and knowledge of current in-service teachers, and developing their awareness of professional practice, while at the same time filling the enormous gap between limited teacher supply and increase in student enrollment.

7. Reducing the gender gap within both the teaching force and within the enrollment of students

**Improving Teacher Motivation and Performance**

**Historical Background**

The dramatic increase in student enrollment in Afghanistan in the past eight years has placed a severe burden on the government to find teachers for the rapidly expanding numbers of classrooms; to find teachers who have a sufficient education to enable them to be considered for any level of teaching; to find individuals educationally qualified to teach the subject fields required in the new curriculum; and to recruit qualified females to teach in all grade levels, all subjects, and even in remote and disadvantaged provinces.

The Teacher Education General Directorate (TED) of the Ministry of Education (MoE), Government of Afghanistan (GoA) is responsible for setting up the infrastructure for pre- and in-service teacher education and for planning, delivering and monitoring teacher education throughout the country. TED’s record of achievement includes an enormous growth in the number of teachers now teaching in classrooms throughout the
nation. Twelve years ago, the schools were decimated, few students were enrolled, and few teachers were available. However, under the new government the numbers of students needing education multiplied and the demand for teachers created an emergency priority for the Ministry of Education to be urgently addressed by TED. Not only were thousands of new teachers needed, but improving the quality and education of teachers was high on the agenda. TED first developed in-service training programs for teachers whose numbers grew from almost 20,000 mostly unqualified and mostly male teachers in 2002 to over 180,000 teachers (31% female) in 2014. At the same time the MoE anticipated an increasing need for numbers of newly trained teachers.

The numbers of teachers now in the government system will soon reach 200,000 with over 30% of them women; while a decade ago, under the harsh educational policies of the Taliban, women were not allowed to teach in schools and the total number of male teachers was estimated unofficially to be about 20,000.

In-Service Teacher Education -- District Teacher Training Teams (DT3)

The Ministry of Education has launched a national teacher training program called DT3 (District Teacher Training Teams) that is implemented throughout all the provinces by in a consistent approach that uses a trainer of trainer model. The DT3 program has now completed six years of implementation through the World Bank funding of EQUIP (Educational Quality Improvement Program). The DT3 program is under the direct management of the Teacher Education General Directorate (TED) of the Ministry of Education, through contracts awarded to four consortiums of NGOs for a period of fourteen months to continue the professional development of teachers and school administrators in all 34 provinces.
The first in-service training packages were designed to provide basic training in pedagogy for all teachers in the nation; then TED introduced upgraded and up-dated content for all subject areas as and aligned this training with the national curriculum and textbooks. These in-service trainings, called INSETs, do not end with short intense workshops, but provides sustained follow-up in the schools as part of school improvement. After delivering INSET-I and II trainings based on teachers’ needs, TED developed and conducted INSET-III training focusing on literacy and numeracy for teachers of Grades 1-6 and a more intensive focus on content knowledge for teaching in all other grades. Teachers were organized into four subject specialty groups for INSET III including math, science, social science, and humanities. Religious studies were included in the Humanities section. The content was not taught in a mechanical way, topic by topic, but the training focus was on assessing the needs of the teachers to determine where they needed the most help in comprehending the content and in being able to communicate the concepts and skills to students. Under EQUIP II in 23 provinces out of 34, thorough DT3 program implemented by NGOs, so far more than 122,675 teachers received training in three packages INSET I, INSET II & INSET III. In Inset III totally, 122,675 teachers are trained, out of which 41,952 (34.2%) are female.

DT3 has delivered in-service training packages, developed within TED and delivered by TED trainers, in a series of INSET I through IV that has included both pedagogy and specialized academic content. The goals have been to develop a national teaching force that is familiar with the standards of teaching approved by the Ministry, the specific teaching
competencies identified for good teaching, the principles of best practices in schools and classrooms and the psycho-social and healthy positive environments necessary for child friendly schools.

The professional development of school principals and administrators has also been part of the more recent DT3 program; now four packages (SMT I – IV) have been designed and delivered for improving school management, developing school leadership, and providing professional vision for creating schools as learning communities.

Today the training programs for school administrators are aligned with the in-service (INSET) teacher training programs and with the courses taught for teachers at the TTCs in order to have a unified, consistent teacher education system of the highest quality possible.

The INSET and SMT packages are aligned with each other, as well as with the national education goals and MoE strategic plan, in order to ensure a synthesis between what teachers are being taught about their roles and responsibilities and what principals
and school administrators are being taught about their responsibilities toward students, their school staff, and parents/families in the community.

**Collaboration and Sustained Development Nation:** The next set of training materials, now in the process of development, will be a program with exercises and workbook materials to develop habits and skills in reflection and self-assessment, to be shared by teachers and principals. These workbooks and the parallel trainings will reinforce the principle that teacher evaluation is integrally tied to self-assessment, mentoring, setting goals, and being open to peer collaboration, student feedback on teaching, and using classroom observational materials for discussion of learning outcomes. This new more collaborative training program will be linked to the Ministry’s expectation that teachers, in order to be granted a credential or to advance professionally with improved salaries, must each prepare Individual Professional Development Plans that they will reflectively review but also use with their principal for annual evaluations.
All DT3 programs are built on the principle that professional development and improved teaching do not result from quick-fix short workshops, conferences or trainings, therefore the follow-through after the training to extend the training and to embed it in the schools of the participants is a key component of the DT3 program. Learning Circles for principals and separate learning circles for teachers are established with excellent results. Collegial connections are not only encouraged but deliberately fostered through peer collaboration, study teams, examples of team teaching, mentoring, coaching activities, and other strategies to open up classroom doors, break the traditional isolation of teachers, and create the school as a learning community including student participation.

Another initiative to increase and ensure teacher competence is the development and integration of teachers’ standards, categories of competencies, and measurement of competence through intense observational monitoring and through the introduction of a National Teacher Examination. The standards and explicit competencies are woven into, and threaded through all components of TED programs in-service and pre-service.

**Increasing and Improving the Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs)**

In 2002, the nation had four small institutes for teacher training with approximately 450 students, all male, enrolled. As TED became responsible for educating teachers for primary and lower secondary schools the number of teacher training colleges (TTCs) grew rapidly under TED leadership from the original four institutes to what is now 48 TTCs and 195 district based teacher development centers (TDCs). Each of the 34 provinces now has one or more TTCs. The total TTC enrollment
is now 80,891 (with 54% female), including pre-service students as well as in-service teachers who need to upgrade their education. They are required to meet the minimum requirement of grade 14 to be a qualified Tashkil teacher with an opportunity for an improved salary. Today, of the 180,000 registered in-service teachers about half of them do not meet the government requirement of having completed grade 14, the two-year teacher training college program.

This graph shows that the enrollment is TTC is dramatically increasing but the number of existing school teachers who are enrolled in the in-service program of TTC are declining since most teachers who are concentrated in major urban areas and at the centers of the provinces are upgraded and they have successfully completed their two year TTC program.

Along with the increase in TTCs and their student enrollments, satellite Teacher Development Centers (TDCs) were established in the districts of the provinces where distance from the TTC made attendance of in-service teachers difficult. These Centers
provide the approved college courses for teacher who cannot attend the center based TTC for every required class.

Since 2001 a total of more than 136,650 students graduated from both pre-service and in-service programs of teacher training colleges across Afghanistan with 43% female.

This year we enrolled 37,852 new students in the TTCs out of which 62% are female. We also graduated 30,413 students (53% female). One the major factors in this enrolment and graduation increase is the impact of the girl’s scholarship program at the TTCs providing financial aid to female students to enable them to enroll and complete their teacher training, and to become teachers in their districts. Since starting the program (2009), 11,436 female students have received scholarship and out of those students only 502 (4.3 %) dropped out or failed and did not complete the program. This means that 96% of these female students successfully completed the two year TTC training in most disadvantage and remote provinces.
Attracting the Best into the Teaching Profession and Closing the Gender Gap

TED has approached this topic at the levels of the district, the provinces, and the national level in several ways. The National Teacher Examination was initiated to determine the level of academic competence of teachers and to set a minimum level for all teachers. TED has used pressure and persuasion to ensure that local districts employ persons who are qualified and no longer use teaching appointments as rewards for personal reasons. The Ministry school supervisors, and TED monitors, have instituted procedures for tracking on compliance with this requirement.

While educating pre-service and in-service teachers is a major accomplishment of TED, other professional initiatives have been launched, especially programs to increase the number of female teachers, to provide incentives for and evidence of teacher competence, and to advance the status of teachers as professionals with extraordinary skills. These initiatives include the Girls’ Scholarship Program at the TTCs providing financial aid to female students to enable them to enroll and complete their teacher training, and to become teachers in their districts.

The Girls’ Scholarship Program (GSP) in the TTCs

The Girls’ Scholarship Program was initiated in order to encourage and support the TTC recruitment, enrollment and program completion of talented but underprivileged girls. This program targeted girls who had completed secondary school, but now a plan is being piloted to create a program at the TTCs in which girls may complete both their secondary school certificate and the TTC diploma under a combined multiple-year program at the TTC.
TED distributed scholarships (USD-60/month) to disadvantaged but academically capable women enrolled in TTCs in 25 provinces with low female enrolment levels. An important goal is not only to increase the cadre of female teachers, but to increase the number of females educated in the nation. This fact in itself is a significant long term contribution to the benefit of women and families.

During the reporting period a total of 7,906 female students received scholarships. It is remarkable since the starting of the program (2009), around 11,436 female students have received scholarship and out of those students only 502 (4.3 %) dropped out or failed and did not complete the program. This means that 96% of these female students successfully completed the two year TTC training in most disadvantage and remote provinces. Many have become teachers and also may continue their education at the university level.

**Regional Allowances for TTC Instructors**

TED focused on the systematic development and improvement of the Teacher Training Colleges through adding new courses, revising the student teaching practicum to make it a heart of professional training, and by providing incentives to qualified instructors who will accept teaching positions in the TTCs in remote and insecure areas. These incentives are offered in the form of region allowances.

These lecturers receive an allowance of 10,000 Afghanis (roughly USD $200) per month in addition to their salary so they can cover extra transportation or security costs and/or to provide them an incentive to continue teaching in difficult conditions.
Masters Degree Programs for TTC Faculty

The upgrading of knowledge and skills of TTC instructors is being implemented through opportunities for graduate study offered in several different formats. By partnering with institutions of higher education, both government and private, in Afghanistan through international support, the TTC instructors are facilitated in completing Master’s Degree in Education programs that are specifically designed to help them update and upgrade their knowledge of their specialty field, but will also ground their practice in the principles of pedagogy to be taught to the TTC students who are expected to become the next generation of teachers. Every effort is made to have gender equity in the groups who are admitted to these graduate programs.

In order to further improve the quality of teaching and learning at the Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) and Teacher Development Centers (TDCs), TED in collaboration with the American University of Afghanistan (AUAF), designed a Master’s Degree program in Education for 320 Instructors of the TTCs and TDCs of Afghanistan. The program seeks to develop faculty skills in research, critical thinking, logical reasoning, teacher training, pedagogy, and content knowledge that will improve their effective as teacher trainers and advance their teaching careers. The curriculum for this program is specifically designed to improve the knowledge and skills of instructors working to educate future and current teachers.

Improving Quality of TTC Programs through Curriculum Improvement

The curricula at the TTCs has dramatically changed in the past few years as new concepts of pedagogy have been introduced through courses such as a newly structured Student Teaching Practicum, Action Research, a Portfolio Assessment requirement, and
cross-cutting issues in courses introduced for Gender Equity, as well as Peace and Conflict Resolution. The introduction of a Primary Teaching Specialty is nearly ready to be launched in the TTC curriculum.

For the first time in history, TTCs and TDCs students will have standardized resource books and instructional materials. Approximately 247 titles of students’ resource books and instructional guides for both pre-service and in-service programs have been developed and the development of 50 more titles currently in the process and million copies to TTCs and TDCs were distributed.

**Improving Teacher Motivation and Performance through Technology**

**And Through Establishing Credentialing System and Teacher Education Management Information Systems (TEMIS)**

The plan for a national teacher credentialing system, developed after many months of consultation and work by a numerous groups of educators, is now ready to be approved and implemented. The plan tentatively has 4 tiers or steps on the professional ladder for teachers. The first is a Provisional Credential to be given to teachers who have not yet met all the qualifications required for a fully credentialed teacher. Certain qualifications must be met however, and all minimal qualifications must be met within a certain time period, probably 5 years. CBE teachers may qualify for this category as well as prospective teachers educated in other countries who do not have training in pedagogy.

Tier II is an Interim Credential given to teachers who have met the minimal qualifications including evidence of a grade 14 diploma, a passing score on the National Teacher Examination or TTC exit exam, a portfolio evaluation and an application for the
credential. This credential also has a time limit of 6 years, but the time does not start until the credential holder has a position as a teacher.

Tier III Professional Credential. This may be earned after 5 years of successful and competent teaching with evidence and recommendations provided. Even this credential is not given for a lifetime, but to renew it the teacher must provide evidence of continuing professional development and/or education.

Tier IV Advanced Professional Credential. This is advanced step in the teacher’s career that has specific credentials with titles for different types of positions including that of Administrator, Subject Matter Specialist, Teacher Trainer, Mentor or Coach, Curriculum Specialist. These titles may not be the final ones included, and other qualifications and credential regulations may be inserted as the proposal is discussed widely.

The use of technology in TED programs and offices has brought dramatic change and continues to bring new opportunities for the application of a variety of technology modes throughout the TTC and TDC network. With the availability of technology for monitoring and evaluation through the skills of a TEMIS unit of TED, what was once possible in highly technically advanced nations, is now possible for the MoE and for TED. The most recent application is the use of smart phones in the TTCs to monitor and assess many different aspects of institutional programs from teaching and student learning to basic administrative information using forms developed and approved specifically for use by TED. The data are transferred immediately to the TED main server and can be analyzed and reported within minutes.
Mobile application has been developed to improve efficiency, data accuracy and motivation among data collection teams and can be contrasted with the inefficient and wasteful paper-based method of monitoring and evaluation. The application is compatible with almost every smart phone, data collected in data capturing formats in mobile phones is to be sent out via GPRS internet to the server and a web application is there to show the results and reports coming from the collected data that includes geographical and multimedia data.

**Technology Options:** For the first time Monitoring and Evaluation is being done through mobile application in TED. Currently TED has the technical resources to efficiently operate Monitoring and evaluation through Mobile Application and has distributed about smart phones to its staff and trained them in the usage of smart phone for monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring forms pre-service and in-service trainings for TED have been developed.

The capacity now for rapid communication throughout the teacher training network is enabling the TED data base to be integrated with the Ministry data base, with results that can be used for making policy decisions for current program improvement and for future planning. These advances and accomplishments are achievements that could not have been dreamed of at the time of national re-building twelve years ago.

While TEMIS continued to build on the system development, the process of data entry into the system as part of TTC Students’ Management Information System progressed simultaneously.
These are only a few of our initiatives for teachers and students of Afghanistan, and all of the programs mentioned here are works-in-progress, but have a track record from various evaluations, teacher feedback, and analysis from our data bases.

In all of the initiatives, projects, programs of the Ministry and within the Teacher Education General Directorate our goals are not driven by numbers, although we have faced acute shortages of teachers and dramatic numbers of enrolled children and youth to be educated. Our aim is to provide an environment for teaching and learning in which both teachers and students are enthusiastic learners. Our vision is to have all schools and all classrooms places of physical and psychological safety, places where creativity and inquiry thrive, places without discrimination of any kind, places where girls are respected and expected to learn as well and as much as boys, places where children with special needs are valued and supported in their learning. We believe it takes committed, enthusiastic, well prepared teachers who also need a supportive learning/teaching environment and who can envision a career in which they develop and grow professionally.

In this paper we have described briefly some of the ways in which the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan is leading ways to improve national education through supporting the professional development of teachers. We are exploring new ways of attracting new teachers into the field and encouraging the best and brightest, both male and female, to become teachers. The status of teachers will improve both as the calibre of teachers rises and as the conditions and compensation for teaching improve. Teachers become teachers often because they have enjoyed being students and they enjoy learning; therefore, the opportunity to develop professionally and to be recognized for professional
achievements, skills, and knowledge is part of our strategic policy. Programmatically we are building in mechanisms for teacher collaboration and shared professionalism in their schools as they create learning communities. It is well known that the classroom teacher is the key to student learning; but it is not so clearly recognized that the school leader, the principal, is the key to excellence in teacher’s performance. Therefore, we continue to work with school administrators to help them be, not only good managers, but educational leaders who can inspire a shared vision for learning in their schools. We are introducing a theme of self-reflection and self-assessment throughout all of our work including classrooms, schools, and departments within TTCs and within TED. We are introducing principals and teachers to newer, more healthy and productive, forms of evaluation of their own work and that of their students. We are moving from a supervisory, punitive, threatening model of teacher evaluation to a model that encourages shared assessment directed toward improvement of individual teachers and school-wide reform.

We have as a department team in TED a fresh sense of purpose, a new sense of professionalism and enthusiasm for our work. With these recent successes our vision for the future is expanding with renewed optimism.