

DAY 2: Session - IV

Chairperson : Prof. M.M. Pant
Co-Chair : Prof. Saroj Yadav , NCERT, India
Rapporteur : Dr. Sandhya Kumar, Assistant Director, NIOS
 Mr. Bijay Malik, NCERT, India

The Afghanistan Experience...

The first presentation of the day was made by Mr. Shafiq Ahmad Qarizada, Senior Advisor, Ministry of Education, Afghanistan. The presentation started with an overview of the educational



Mr. Shafiq Ahmad Qarizada, Senior Advisor, Ministry of Education, Afghanistan making a presentation

scenario in the country. Challenges of low literacy rates especially for females, as well as low enrollment rates, in the schools were discussed. Despite the fact that the number of teachers had increased over the years, only 50% of children were enrolled in schools. There are instances of high school graduate teachers teaching grade XII. Since existing curriculum in force is about 20 years old, it needs to be updated and changed to incorporate the latest information and teaching strategies. It was further informed that although the number of schools had increased, infrastructure was yet to be upscaled forcing children to study under trees or in the open. Due to security reasons, nearly 6% schools had either been burnt down or closed leading to about 11 million illiterates in the country.

Mr. Qarizada informed that there were four types of schools in the country, namely, the functional literacy schools, the workers' supplementary schools, the vocational supplementary schools, and the night shift schools. He said that the basic objectives of these schools were to provide literacy, give additional vocational inputs and to cater to the educational needs of working persons after office hours. Low salaries of teachers, lack of schools for adolescence education and poverty were cited as the main challenges to education in the country.

Mr. Qarizada said that the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan had recently developed a five year National Education Strategy in consultation with national and international partners and chalked out a strategy that called for national coverage of the educational and literacy programmes.

Delegates were keen to know the reasons for targeting and destroying schools in Afghanistan. They were informed that fundamental groups felt that educated and informed people in the rural areas would not support their cause. They were also against the philosophy of educating girls. Reacting to the question of security for students of night schools, it was clarified that night schools were actually after office hours, i.e., after 4 o' clock. Moreover, almost all the night schools were in the capital city where security was not a concern.

It was suggested that instead of having some

vocational inputs in other courses, it may be more useful to offer market driven vocational courses for older age groups as well as school children, which will help them in adopting some income generating activities. Regarding the low female literacy rates in the country, it was clarified that the Ministry of Education was trying to address the root cause of the problem which was lack of female teachers in the field. The Ministry was now committed to positive gender discrimination in education - for instance in literacy classes, 60% classes are for females and 40% for males. Regarding mental health issues of adolescents, he said that there was hardly anyone in Afghanistan who had not been affected by the war, but the

situation was improving now and such issues would definitely be addressed.

Reacting to a query on education through *Madarsas*, it was said that though some of them impart religious instruction, efforts were on to develop formal *Madarsas* under the Islamic Education Programme of the Ministry of Education where in addition to religious subjects, general education subjects may also be taught. Efforts were also underway under the National Literacy Programme of the Ministry to train *Mullahs* as literacy teachers. The *Mullahs*, who are literate and influential would be trained as literacy teachers and as advocates of girls' education.

The Pakistan Experience...

The second presentation was made by Dr. Syed Sadaqat Mehdi, Registrar, Virtual University Pakistan. He informed that Pakistan which was a developing country had many challenges and comparatively fewer resources to overcome these. There were widespread gaps in educational opportunities to meet the needs of adolescents.

answers to their problems. The Government of Pakistan was trying its utmost to put the country on the track of development in order to provide better facilities in education, health and other social sectors. Several non-governmental organizations were eager to join hands with the Government for creating programmes of Adolescent Education. Similarly, community based organizations and other developmental agencies like World Bank, Asian Development Bank, United Nations Development Program, UNESCO, UNICEF, OPEC and others were contributing to improve low levels of education and productivity in rural areas. The focus of these programmes includes poverty of families, child labour, infant malnutrition, health issues, social and cultural situations, agriculture, problems like drugs, AIDS and environment etc. Both educational modes (formal/non-formal) were being used to address the gaps.



Dr. Muhammad Arshad, Deputy Secretary, Education, Pakistan making a point as Dr. Syed Sadaqat Mehdi, Registrar, Virtual University of Pakistan looks on

Most adolescents were confronted with uncertainty and confusion, as there were very limited reliable sources from where they could find

The delegates were informed that the Government's medium term objectives included achievement of 100% literacy rate by activating the formal set up, covering its backlog through the non-formal sector and launching poverty sensitive adult literacy

programmes, providing educational facilities to community through NGO, involvement, ensuring access to basic education by adopting non-formal education (NFE), supporting initiatives of formal education towards achieving Universalization of Primary Education (UPE) by adopting Non-Formal Basic Education (NFBE) option, integrating all basic education and literacy programmes with life and marketable earning skills and providing purposeful and market oriented quality higher education of international standards.

The role of the three agencies engaged in imparting adolescence education in Pakistan was highlighted, namely, Aga Khan University, Karachi, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, and the Virtual University of Pakistan. The Virtual University combined quality with affordability and strives at

imparting knowledge across the nation and even abroad, also allowing the students of remote areas to brighten their future as well as contributing to the local and national economy at large. Students are allowed to access moderated discussion boards that contain questions (asked from students all over the country and abroad) and their replies. The lectures of courses are available on CDs for students and also to the users from other teaching institutions. This enabled the students to review their lessons at any time. The Virtual University of Pakistan provides the entire lecture materials on its website. In addition, printed lectures handouts/ notes were also provided to students and to the users from other universities/institutions.

The Chair appreciated the presenters for sharing information with clarity, alacrity and openness.

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