

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind



June 29, 2016

Schools must have Co-curricular Activities

The aim of education is not only to impart some factual knowledge to the students but to ensure their overall and balanced development. Children do not need only mental development but also physical, social, moral and emotional one. All these needs cannot be met only with book reading. They need specific activities to satisfy these needs. And, these needs can be satisfied through proper co-curricular activities. Unfortunately, different schools in our country do not realize these facts. Both the public and private schools in Afghanistan lack facilities and even the will to give proper preference to co-curricular activities. The public schools are mostly irresponsible in this regard, while the private schools have their businesses to pursue. Therefore, the schools in our country require to have a comprehensive co-curricular programs as they ensure proper development of the students.

Co-curricular activities ensure a balance and wholesome personality development. They make children well-adjusted physically, mentally, emotionally and socially. They are helpful in moral training. Children find opportunities to decide and choose the right things and to learn the great values of self-control and moderation. Through the community life of games and activities, the children learn an inner discipline which remains with the children as a directing and restraining influence when they are away from the school. Students, through co-curricular activities, develop a sense of cooperation. They study, work, play and visit together and co-operate with each other. So a spirit of teamwork and coordination develops among them.

By taking part in co-curricular activities pupils realize the relation of the society to the individual and of the individual to the society. The pupil becomes a member of the group and thus he learns universal brotherhood, true democracy and cooperation. In fact, schools can become a sort of primary training ground for democracy. They should be organized and administrated on democratic lines. This will help students to become active citizens and to develop civic sense.

Co-curricular activities retain not only the physical health but also the mental health of the students. By doing regular exercise their bodies become healthy, which ultimately generate healthy minds. At the same time because of the psychological training involved in such activities the students get ample chances of improving their mental health.

One of the most important aspects of the co-curricular activities is that it will inculcate discipline among the students. Every activity has some rules and regulations. During these activities students abide by these rules and regulations and they become well-disciplined. The same discipline learning can support students to develop a sense of respect for discipline in other spheres of life.

Most of the co-curricular activities are performed in the form of teams and groups which need a leader. So leadership qualities are created in the students. And, when students spend their spare time in constructive and positive activities, their time is saved to be wasted or spent in destructive and negative work. Moreover, during co-curricular activities students attend different matches and compete with each other in order to win these matches. Thus, they develop a sense of competition which is of great help in their future life.

There are different sorts of activities that can be adopted as co-curricular activities by the schools in Afghanistan. One of them is school assembly. By arranging school assembly, the students get together, recite verses from Holy Quran, sing national anthem and raise national flag. These all acts will develop a sense of patriotism among the students.

Students can also be allowed to organize unions and associations for different sorts of purposes, for example, art council etc. These unions and associations can help students in their social lives in future.

Sports and games form an integral part of co-curricular activities. Therefore, the schools must ensure that they have enough space for sports activities. Unfortunately, most of the schools in our country only have some classrooms while there are many others that even do not have classrooms, as well.

Different sorts of competitions like debate, quiz, writing and many others can support students in developing their skills like oratory and speaking skills and show their different sorts of talents, as well. They will also enable them to express themselves freely and confidently.

The government authorities, particularly Afghanistan Ministry of Education requires to have a proper check on the schools and ensure that they include co-curricular activities in their programs. Limiting the students only to the books will limit their thinking horizons and at ultimately deprive them of different skills and advantages which they have the potential and, at the same time, the right to learn. In the run for quantity, mostly the quality has been ignored in education sector in the country. Many public and private schools have been established only to increase the number of the schools and the students attending them, not to generate proper education and personality development of the students.



A Glance At Challenges Of Afghan Women

By Mohamad Zahir Akbari

Despite impressive efforts made since 2001, and some significant strides in education, in many ways things remain extremely difficult for women. All major social indicators continue to show a consistent pattern of women's challenges in nearly all dimensions of their lives and Afghanistan remains one of the worst countries in the world to be born as a woman. However, since 2001, 2.5 million girls have returned to school but the political instability intensified issues as if they are suffering unprecedented frustration. Illiteracy among women remains high (87.4 per cent); only 6 per cent of women over the age of 25 have a formal education, resulting in gaps in the labor market. Due to severe restrictions on mobility, only 8 per cent of women are involved in wage employment outside the agricultural sector. Women's mortality rate is higher than men's, even when factoring in male combatants as evidenced in the fact that life expectancy is 48 years for men and 44 years for women. Violence against women and girls remains endemic, with severe consequences for women's education, health, security, mobility, unemployment and political empowerment.

These problems are interconnected and have reciprocal effect on each other - making lasting solutions even more difficult. According to past surveys, lack of education for women is consistently seen as the biggest problem. Only 23.5 percent of the population above 15 years old is literate, while the rate for women is even worse at 12.6 percent. At 36 percent, Afghanistan's enrollment of girls in primary schools is low compared with 90.4 percent in Iran, 67 percent in Saudi Arabia, and 62 percent in Pakistan.

Only 40% of Afghan girls attend elementary school, and only one in 20 girls attend school beyond the sixth grade. There are approximately three times more boys attending school than girls. Many Afghan families will only permit their daughters to attend all-girls schools close to home and few such schools exist. Other families believe it is unnecessary for girls to be educated. Schools for girls have been burned down, hundreds of teachers educating girls have been threatened or killed, and girls and have been physically harmed while attending or walking to or from school. Many men were killed in the armed conflicts, and older husbands are likely to die sooner than their child brides.

In spite of above critical conditions, Afghanistan has experienced a few major achievements in the education sector for women, including the adoption of certain written guarantees in the national constitution (Article 44) regarding development of balanced education for women; the enrollment of 2.2 million girls in primary schools (extraordinary in Afghanistan's history); and permission to establish higher education institutes in specialized fields and basic literacy schools (Article 46).

However, many written guarantees have not implemented yet and many obstacles lie ahead, such as local traditions and discriminations against women's education; lack of female

schools in villages; lack of proper education infrastructure; lack of personal security; and lack of female teachers, to name a few. There are also socio-tribal beliefs that consider education unnecessary or even hazardous for women, further preventing girls from attending schools. Even in seminaries, the number of female students is very low due to lack of interest in women's education and lack of female religious teachers. Other impediments such as violence against women, underage marriages, forced marriages, economic problems, considering girls as temporary family member and marriage as a solution to family disputes (known as baad), also hinder them from education. In addition, lack strong commitment to National laws and modern values along with coming warlord Gulbadin Hekmatyar created new concerns for women community.

Lack of Job Opportunities
From 31 percent up to 35 percent unemployment is cited as the second biggest problem Afghan women face. A separate study indicated that only a quarter of government positions are occupied by women. Although Article 48 of the constitution stipulates that every Afghan has the right to work, the government does not pave the way for women to gain positions in government. Other factors also contribute to unemployment, such as low literacy rates and professional skills among women; disagreement over a woman's right to work outside of the house in most uneducated tribal area. Parents often hold a double standard regarding children's education, with more attention given to the education of boys than to girls as boys are considered to be the permanent member of the family.

Early Marriage
Almost 60% of girls are married by 16 and it is estimated that up to 80 percent of marriages in poor rural areas are either forced or arranged. Most girls marry far older men - some in their 60s - whom they meet for the first time at their wedding. The implications of child marriage cannot be underestimated. Married girls do not continue their education and remain illiterate. They have babies while still young teenagers, increasing health problems and risking death for themselves and their children (the risk of death during pregnancy or childbirth for girls under 14 is five times higher than for adult women).

Lack of Security
Risk of kidnapping, explosions and poisoning can also cause to prevent from education and force them into early marriage. moreover, Ruling talibanized ideology such as insisting women and girls stay at home, and can only leave if they are fully covered and accompanied by a male relative.

Accordingly, the major indicators show that almost 40% of Afghan women are extremely isolated. They are exceptionally in need to draw the attention of international community and the government of Afghanistan. Education can be suggested as one of the best strategies to more empowerment and independence of women in a man dominating country.

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The U.S. Strategy on Afghanistan under a possible Trump or a likely Hillary

By Naser Koshan

Exclusive for the Daily Outlook

As we get closer to the general elections in the U.S. presidential race, both the presumptive nominees are placing Afghanistan as a top priority on their foreign policy agendas. Afghanistan, considering its current political status quo will pose a great importance to the administration leading the highest office in the country. Both the republicans and democrats, have a unanimous consensus on dealing with the Afghan leadership on closer terms, and laying out a credible timeframe for the leaders in Kabul to straighten up their acts and start working vigorously to eliminate corruption and fulfill their campaign promises.

Fifteen years on, Afghanistan still struggles with a lagging economic growth, a critical unemployment rate, and an increasing social disparity. The distribution of wealth among its citizens is at large in dismay and the growing distance in earned income between the middle class and the rich is growing at an alarming rate. Extortions, kidnappings, state bureaucracy, and uncertainty in the political system have forced businessmen to fear for their life, move assets abroad, and invest outside the country.

Evidently, the U.S. has huge stakes in Afghanistan's stability. First, the world can not afford another 9/11 originating from Afghanistan; secondly, the country being turned again as a congregation hub for international terrorist movements rings a devastating alarm to the stability of not only Afghanistan and its far and distant neighbors, as well as; the U.S. and its allies around the globe, to minimize this potential threat, the U.S. has a strategic and moral responsibility to contain this menace, and strengthen its presence in the country for a foreseeable future.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan as both a strategic partner and a co-signer on the BSA (Bilateral Security Agreement) with the U.S. has even a bigger commitment to secure its borders and deliver with utter accountability and time-bound deliverables to its citizens.

No doubt, president Obama's recent order to give U.S. military based in Afghanistan special permission to conduct airstrikes and target Taliban leadership and fighters in the country can be a game changer and very effective in dismantling their safe

sanctuaries. Since the former president Hamid Karzai put an end to the U.S. aerial strikes on Taliban in Afghan villages, Taliban have been using locals as human shields and effectively ambushing local and foreign soldiers, thus causing immense casualties to the indigenous armed forces.

Candidate Trump, previously on several occasions has supported the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, deeming it necessary and key to the U.S. national security interests. He has expressed his deepest concerns over the way the U.S. has conducted itself in going after the rogue elements within the country, and has promised tougher actions on defeating and eliminating groups posing a credible threat to the U.S. national security and that of its strategic partner Afghanistan. Mr. Trump has periodically criticized president Obama on his lack of leadership in dealing with terror groups such as the Taliban and Haqqani network, the later directly responsible for several deadly attacks on U.S. military personnel and diplomatic sites across Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, upon the formation of the NUG in Afghanistan in early 2015, the prospects for viable economic development and social welfare seem meager, resulting to an influx of migration, forcing thousands of educated young Afghans leave the country in search of a better and secured life, contributing to the already dilemma of brain drainage in the country. Both the stakeholders in the government thus far have failed to address these issues on a serious note and sketch policies and time bound frameworks to tackle these concerns and start delivering tangible results.

Candidate Hillary, on the other hand, both as a veteran politician and seasoned stateswoman have worked closely with the former Afghan administration and as former secretary of state has traveled to Afghanistan on numerous occasions. She rightfully understands the importance of a stable Afghanistan; she will hold both the political power and firm intentions to keep the leadership in Kabul in check and require them to work tirelessly to contain corruption and bring about tangible socio-economic reforms.

Last but not least, no matter who emerges victorious in the U.S. presidential race in November, Afghanistan considering its current status quo and volatile political future will remain a top priority for the upcoming commander - in - chief in the white house.

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